Rapid Response Collecting in times of COVID: A new path in museums' identity?

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A new path in museums' identity?

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Abbreviation	**Definition**
IFPH	International Federation for Public History
NEMO	Network of European Museum Associations
RRC	Rapid Response Collecting

1. Introduction

1.1. Research topic

The COVID-19 pandemic comprises one of the biggest challenges for museums, the biggest after World War II, some say. The virus outbreak, followed by restrictions that led to the cultural sector's shutting down, put museums worldwide against the pressuring challenge of a global crisis which has never been recorded before. How could they respond to this pandemic? And what would their role as cultural institutions be during a historical health crisis? What do they offer, and how can they stay relevant to the ongoing events?

The dire need to document and preserve the pandemic memory for future generations was immediately prioritised. In order to achieve this, museums turned to contemporary collecting strategies, and more specifically, to Rapid Response Collecting (RRC), a methodology focused on the documentation and preservation of ephemeral or endangered material culture (physical, immaterial and/or digital-born) of pivotal contemporary phenomena. Although not new as a museological practice, the pandemic's extreme circumstances led to an extensive adaptation of the strategy. For the first time, RRC was used by museums with diverse orientations (historical, scientific, social, artistic), with or without previous experience with contemporary collecting, in order to preserve the memory of COVID-19.

COVID collecting was nothing but easy. On top of the pressuring need to collect a fast progressing and unpredictable phenomenon, the challenging reality of the pandemic (lockdowns, remote working, restriction measures) combined with the lack of previous experience generated a long period during which museums' collecting practices needed to adjust to the pandemic's status quo or even take underexplored directions. New and alternative acquisition methods, such as crowdsourcing and digital collecting, gained museums' preference.[1] Alternative items, such as tweets, Zoom screenshots, shopping lists, or even dreams, attracted museums' attention as valuable documentation of the pandemic life.[2]

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[1] Indicative examples of museum's crowdsourced projects during the pandemic not only from Europe and the United States, but also Asia, Africa, New Zealand and Australia is presented in Tizian Zumthurm's "Crowdsourced COVID- 19 collections: A brief overview," *International Public History* 4, no. 1 (2021):77-83, https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2021-2021.

[2] Dana Andrew, "Interview with Kay Jones, lead curator of urban and community history, Museum of Liverpool about collecting objects and stories around the COVID pandemic," *ICOM*, October 5, 2020, https://uk.icom.museum/interview-with-kay-jones-lead-curator-of-urban-and-community-history-museum-of-liverpool-about-collecting-objects-and-stories-around-the-covid-pandemic/; Mikaela Lefrak, "The Smithsonian is collecting coronavirus 'artifacts' to document the pandemic," *National Public Radio*, May 14, 2020, https://www.npr.org/local/305/2020/05/14/856120435/the-smithsonian-is-collecting-coronavirus-artifacts-to-

However, this new challenging reality of COVID collecting did not only entail practical adaptations for museums. It is widely accepted that museums' active presence and involvement during the pandemic emphasised their social responsibility, repositioning them in the centre of contemporary society and reintroducing them not only as heritage or memory institutions but also as social ones.[3] Through their collecting initiatives, museums strengthen their bonds with their audience and communities, amplifying, even unexpectedly, their role as social agents. Especially the numerous crowdsourcing collecting initiatives put museums in direct contact with their public increasing their visibility and at the same time creating new portals of communication, expression or even relief from isolation and sadness caused by the pandemic.[4]

After this brief description of Rapid Response Collecting initiatives during COVID-19, it becomes apparent that this crisis constitutes a turning point for museums on a practical and conceptual level. New collecting methods were explored, new perceptions of "museum-worthy documentation" were introduced, and new relations with the public were established, developing more participatory and socially active museums. However, reflecting on the museums' response during this pandemic, one cannot help but wonder about the future. What could museums' collecting response to COVID reveal for their future function and role in society?

This thesis aspires to illuminate the potential new paths for museums in the post-COVID era through a closer examination of Rapid Response Collecting initiatives during the pandemic. By reflecting on the results of their collecting activity and examining how RRC affected museums' functions and roles, this research wishes to investigate the questions: How did the extensive use of RRC during the pandemic impact the museums' functions and roles, and, consequently to what extent it could generate a permanent reconsideration of their identity in the post-COVID era?

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document-the-pandemic; Rebecca Atkinson, "Museums to collect Covid dreams from Londoners," *Museums Association*, November 30, 2020, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2020/11/museums-to-collect-covid-dreams-from-londoners/.

[3] Joanna Cobley et al., "Museums in the pandemic: A survey of responses on the current crisis," *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research* 8, (2020): 113, https://doi:10.3167/armw.2020.080109.

[4] "Morris Museum announces Covid-19 oral history project," *Patch*, May 5, 2020, https://patch.com/new-jersey/morristown/morris-museum-announces-covid-19-oral-history-project.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

The present argument around RRC during COVID and its possible long-term impact on museums' identity derives from Simon Knell's observations about collecting and museums' responses during crises or radical change. In his *Museums and the Future of Collecting,* he states:

> "The recent past tells us that museums can expect no assurances of having a future unless they too change in order to demonstrate their relevance. Change here is not simply a matter of educational or exhibition programming, it refers to shifts in the museum's underpinning philosophy. The past is gone, and while we can attempt to hold onto its remnants in our collections and interpretations, we cannot run museums in ways that were conceived on past models. It is here, in this rather challenging world, that the future of collecting exists. And as one of our most heavily guarded, fundamental and conservative activities, collecting will be one of the hardest to re-orientate. The fact is that the collecting policy of today will not fit with tomorrow; but perhaps the collecting policy itself has had its day anyway."[5]

As reflected in this extract, museums' ability to adapt their collecting practices is vital for maintaining their relevance and ensuring long-term sustainability. As society develops, so does museums' responsibility to acknowledge and project its changes, and the collecting practice, as one of the museums' fundamental functions, is a core vehicle to demonstrate their alignment with the needs of contemporary society. However, achieving this level of relevance through their collections is anything but effortless. Ironically, collecting– the practice that requires the highest levels of flexibility within the museum– is bound to traditional and monolithic formats and ideologies, hindering the transition to more elastic structures which facilitate change. Adapting the collecting strategies to contemporary needs extends beyond practical changes to a radical reconsideration of, what Knell calls, museums' underlying "philosophy." This new and sustainable philosophy that could guide museums to their future is depended on *flexibility*. Museums of the future need to be prepared to embrace change on a practical– regarding *what* and *how* they collect– and on a conceptual level– the ideologies and reasons behind their collecting activity which determine their positionality within society.

[5] Simon J. Knell, *Museums and the future of collecting,* (Florence: Routledge, 2004), 12.

Later in his book, Knell will particularly refer to contemporary collecting as one of the most apt strategies toward his vision for future relevant and sustainable museums. In his view, contemporary collecting, although often undervalued, is imbued in the nature of the museological practice and is of vital importance for the construction of social memory.[6] Criticising museums' reluctant attitude towards the practice and their focus on historical rather than contemporary collections, Knell warns that failing– or purposely neglecting– to collect the present undermines museums' credibility as memory institutions and their responsibility to construct new knowledge for the contemporary audience and future generations.[7]

These requests for relevance and flexibility are augmented during periods of radical changes or social, economic and other crises. Examining various U.K. museums, such as the Natural History Museum, during such turbulent times, Knell highlights that recognising and successfully adapting to new standards was the key to their survival.[8] However, looking beyond the forced redirections due to emergent circumstances, Knell supports that museums' adjustments during periods of crises should not only be considered short-term solutions. Critical periods and their particular requirements could uncover new qualities and requirements for the future and generate more permanent reconsiderations for museums. Both on a practical and conceptual level, turbulent periods are unique opportunities for museums to reflect on their practices and positionality within society and eventually "open new paths for their future identity."[9]

Returning to the present day, in the aftermath of one of the most challenging periods in museums' history, Knell's observations could not be more relevant. Urging to preserve the pandemic experience on the one hand and on the other to remain connected to society, museums around the world extensively invest in Rapid Response Collecting programs regardless of orientation or means. However, the new status quo of COVID-19 required museums to adapt and experiment with their collecting approaches, embodying– even so unexpectedly– Knell's warnings about the level of *relevance* and *flexibility* of museums' collecting strategies. COVID-19 and this extensive application of RRC constituted such a significant challenge for museums that could permanently impact their practices and roles, holding the key to Knell's aspirations towards "new paths in museums' identity." These new paths opened for museums in the post-COVID era, however, remain to be seen.

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[6] Idib., 33, 196.
[7] Idib., 196-197.
[8] Idib., 8.
[9] Idib., 9.

1.3. State and limitations of research

Given the global extent of the pandemic and the numerous responses recorded in museums globally, examining the entirety of RRC initiatives during the pandemic is impossible. The evaluation of museum initiatives is until today possible mainly from case studies and reports. Until now, the most extensive overviews of global responses to COVID can be found in two digital maps, one by the International Federation of Public History (IFPH) and the other by the University of Graz.[10] Both interactive maps demonstrate multiple examples of museums and cultural institutions' initiatives worldwide during the pandemic. The former focuses on collecting activities, and the latter attempts to provide an overview of other types of initiatives as well, such as educational programs and virtual tours. Through a first observation, a common result in both maps worth mentioning is the imbalance regarding the recorded initiatives between Western countries and the U.S. on the one hand, and Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world on the other. (Fig. 1, 2) It is unclear whether this observation reflects the representative image of responses or the limitations in research, and a further evaluation is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, it is an issue worthy of further examination.

Furthermore, valuable reports on museums' responses during the pandemic, mainly in Europe and the U.S., have been published by the Network of European Museum Associations (NEMO)[11] and the Council of Europe.[12] The Museums Association, on the other hand, released a brief overview of collecting initiatives, mainly in the U.K.[13] For the Netherlands, the Journal of Conservation & Museum Studies has published Liselore Tissen's short report on the Dutch museums' responses to the physical limitations during the pandemic.[14] While Tizian Zumthurm's article "Crowdsourced COVID- 19 Collections: A Brief Overview" examines indicative examples of museum crowdsourcing projects during the pandemic not only in

[10] International Federation for Public History, "Mapping public history projects about COVID-19," accessed June 1, 2022,"https://ifph.hypotheses.org/3225; "Museum digital initiatives during the coronavirus pandemic," accessed June 1, 2022, https://digitalmuseums.at/index.html.
[11] Network of European Museum Organisations, *Initiatives and actions of the museums in the corona crisis*, Network of European Museum Organisations, 2020; Network of European Museum Organisations, *Survey on the impact of the COVID-19 situation on museums in Europe: Final report*, Network of European Museum Organisations, 2020.
[12] Council of Europe, *Culture in times of Covid-19 or how we discovered we cannot live without culture and creativity. Impressions and lessons learnt from Covid-19*, Council of Europe.
[13] Rebecca Atkinson, "How are museums collecting during coronavirus lockdown?," *Museums Association*, April 2, 2020, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/analysis/2020/04/03042020-how-are-museums-collecting-covid-19/.
[14] Liselore N. M. Tissen, "Culture, corona, crisis: Best practices and the future of Dutch museums," *Journal of Conservation & Museum Studies* 19, no. 4 (2021): 1-8, http://doi.org/10.5334/jcms.207.

Europe and the United States but also in Asia, Africa, New Zealand and Australia.[15] However, at least at the moment the present thesis is produced, none of the existing literature focuses explicitly on the impact of the extensive use of RRC on museums.

Considering the limitations of the existing literature, the present research aspires to shed light on the results of COVID collecting strategies followed by museums and project them to the future and the possible functional and conceptual shifts they might generate. However, an extensive overview of museums' initiatives falls beyond the scope and possibilities of the present research. Therefore, the focus will be on examining and presenting representative examples recorded primarily in Europe and the United Kingdom.

1.4. Methodology and structure

The examination of the possible new paths in museums' identity in the post-COVID era generated by the extensive use of RRC will be primarily based on the comparative qualitative analysis of three case studies: The Rijksmuseum Boerhaave (Dutch National Museum of the History of Science and Medicine) in Leiden, the Amsterdam Museum in Amsterdam and the Museum of London in the city of London. The three institutions represent the two main approaches in RRC during the pandemic: a) the targeted collection of material based on institutional decisions and b) the collection through open public calls. In the first category falls the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, and in the second, the Amsterdam Museum. The Museum of London, on the other hand, presents an interesting combination of the two, initiating both targeted and extensive crowdsourcing projects. In each case, the directions and results of the collecting process were very distinctive, and their critical examination could provide insightful information in our attempt to speculate on the future of museums' identity.

To reach concrete conclusions about how RRC affected the museums' functions and roles, this thesis will first introduce Rapid Response Collecting as a museum practice. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the practice's history and its fundamental challenges and opportunities. Subsequently, the emphasis will be put on the strategy's use during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 3 will present the case studies of Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, Amsterdam Museum and the Museum of London. The information provided in this section is based on personal interviews conducted with museum professionals involved in the RRC initiatives of

[15] Zumthurm, "Crowdsourced COVID-19," 77-83.

each institution, during which the challenges and positive outcomes of RRC in times of COVID were extensively discussed.

In Chapter 4, the key findings from the collected data will be critically examined and compared to the broader literature on museums' responses, placing them in a general context of the RRC during COVID. In this manner, a more cohesive understanding of the impact RRC had on museums will be achieved. All the research results will be finally combined in Chapter 5, where the potential new paths and qualities of the Post-COVID museum will be discovered.

2. Rapid Response Collecting as a museum practice

The use of contemporary collecting strategies in critical ephemeral events is not unknown to the museum world. Especially during the 1960s in the United States of America, museum professionals began more consciously emphasising the documentation of political and social campaigns and movements. Simon Knell, furthermore, highlights museums' responses in times of war, such as in the case of Zagreb's Ethnographic Museum, which collected personal material as documentation of the war during the 1990s.[16] Owain Rhys, on the other hand, in his book *Collecting the Contemporary: A handbook for social history museums*, describes the more recent collecting responses of the Transport Museum in the aftermath of the suicide attacks on July 7, 2005, in London.[17] However, the immediate and active documentation of contemporary ephemeral phenomena has been more extensively discussed during the 21st century under the term Rapid Response Collecting.

A single and widely accepted definition of the practice is yet to be formed. RRC can be described as a contemporary collecting strategy implemented during critical events or crises aiming to collect the "ephemeral and momentous material culture" considered endangered by destruction or loss.[18] The scope of Rapid Response collections can be vast and, of course, depends on the nature of the historic event, the museums' orientation, and their interest. Any form of documentation: material, immaterial objects, digital-born items, oral testimonies, photographs and video footage, and many more could be considered valuable documentation and museum-worthy items that could be acquired for their immediate or future display and research.[19]

The starting point of RRC as an official contemporary collecting strategy is considered the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York.[20] In response to the tragic events, the *History Responds* project launched by the New York Historical Society aspired to document and preserve the memory and material culture of this historical moment.[21] In the following years, RRC remained

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[16] Knell, *Museums*, 132.
[17] Owain Rhys and Zelda Baveystock, *Collecting the contemporary: A handbook for social history museums,* (Edinburgh & Boston: MuseumsEtc,2014*)*, 447-473.
[18] Sandro Debono, "Collecting pandemic phenomena: Reflections on RRC and the art museum," *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals* 17, no. 2 (2021): 180, DOI: 10.1177/1550190620980844.
[19] Deborah Tulani Salahu-Din, "Documenting Black Lives Matter movement in Baltimore through contemporary collecting: An initiative of the National Museum of African American History and Culture" *Collections: A Journal for museum and archives professionals* 15, no. 2-3 (2019): 102-103, https://doi.org/10.1177/1550190620980844.
[20] Sandro Debono, "Collecting pandemic phenomena," 180.
[21] "History responds," New-York historical society, accessed May 5, 2022, https://www.nyhistory.org/history-responds.

an effective tool for museums with mainly historical or social orientations to document important local events due to its immediate and responsive nature.[22] The Black Lives Matter movement, for instance, instigated massive awareness and immediate collecting reaction from significant museums such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture, urging to document and preserve the memory of these pivotal events through flyers, protest signs, tear gas canisters or human testimonies.[23] However, it was not until 2014 that RRC would gain more extensive recognition and be elevated from a local to a global scale when Victoria and Albert Museum in London officially included the practice in its official agenda. Since then, RRC has been included in the official collecting policy, forming a still expanding rapid response collection reflecting on turning points of our historical era through contemporary design items. This initiative of Victoria and Albert constitutes a milestone for the practice, not only by extending its use and outreach beyond small-scale local events and socio-historical museum contexts but also demonstrating the power of Rapid Response collections as active social agents. Rapid Response collections are now considered facilitators of social and political critique, awareness, societal change, and eventually, of a unified global perception of contemporary society.[24]

2.1. Challenges and opportunities

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, museums have often demonstrated a reluctant attitude towards contemporary collecting, focusing more on managing and enriching their historical collections rather than expanding their scope to contemporary material.[25] The negligence of past curators to document contemporary life has caused significant gaps in museum collections and limitations in their interpretation, generating an increasing demand for more holistic and representative museum collections able to reflect and address the complexity of contemporary society.[26] And although the effectiveness and benefits of contemporary collecting towards that

[22] Debono, "Collecting pandemic phenomena," 180.
[23] Sarah Cascone, "'People are unaware of their history': Why museums are collecting artifacts from the Black Lives Matter protests as they're happening," *artnet*, June 9, 2020, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/collecting-2020-black-lives-matter-protests-1878480.
[24] "RRC," V&A, accessed May 3, 2022, https://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/rapid-response-collecting.
[25] The results from a 2012 online survey conducted by the British Social History Curators Group, demonstrated that issues such as lack of staff, budget, storage, conservation or even low public interest and expectations are deterrent factors for the application of contemporary collecting. Adding to this the vague conceptualisation and definition of the practice and lack of a common bases for its application distance professionals even more from the strategy. Rhys and Baveystock, *Collecting the contemporary*, 71-80.
[26] Owain Rhys, *Contemporary collecting: Theory and practice*, (Edinburgh & Boston: MuseumEtc, 2014), 11; Rhys and Baveystock, *Collecting the contemporary*, 15.

end have been addressed throughout the years by prominent scholars such as Simone Knell or Owain Rhys, it remains an ambiguous and often criticised practice. Rapid Response Collecting, consequently, as a contemporary collecting strategy –and a relatively new one! – is not an exception to that rule, with multiple challenges and debates around its use. Although Contemporary and Rapid Response Collecting nowadays tend to be examined as distinctive approaches, many of their characteristics seem to overlap. Therefore, and considering the limited bibliography about RRC, the following examination of the practice will be based on the existing literature on Contemporary Collecting, and more specifically, the work of Owain Rhys and his books *Collecting the Contemporary: A handbook for social history museums*– already mentioned above and– *Contemporary Collecting: theory and practice*.

Since the beginning of contemporary collecting as a recognised museum practice in the early 1900s, its distinctive requirements in comparison to historical collecting became apparent and crucial debates around its use arose; many of them still unresolved. One of the most prominent reoccurring issues relates to the dynamic expansion of the contemporary item. Due to its proximity to what Rhys describes as "the current time" or "happening now,"[27] mass-produced and commonplace objects, video footage, photographic documentation, social media content, video games were transformed into invaluable records of diverse aspects of current society.[28] Some professionals even question the necessity of collecting physical material advocating for alternative forms of documentation such as photographic documentation of objects, oral interviews, video-sound recordings or even performances.[29] This new perception of the materiality of contemporary material results from the increasing interest in the study and collection of everyday life and first-hand human experience. Extensive oral history and community-based projects became widespread collecting methods, turning contemporary documentation from object-based to "people-centred" collecting approaches prioritising the experience over information.[30] This dynamic extension of available material, accurately described by Sharon MacDonald as "proliferation of heritage,"[31] even nowadays, leaves museums overwhelmed, facing the wide range of future museum items and, of course, the new requirements of their management.

[27] Rhys and Baveystock, *Collecting the contemporary*, 16.
[28] Ibid., 56,59,61,63,77.
[29] Rhys, *Contemporary collecting*, 53.
[30] Ibid., 31-37.
[31] Jennie Morgan and Sharon Macdonald, "De-growing museum collections for new heritage futures," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 26, no. 1 (2020): 56, https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2018.1530289.

In the context of Rapid Response Collecting, although one could argue that its collecting scope is more controlled due to its exclusive connection to the ephemeral and endangered culture of current events, this expansion of the museum item is also often discussed. However, the focus is not only on the amount of the available material but even more on the pressuring circumstances under which they are collected. Critical contemporary phenomena with limited duration, such as protests, attacks or warfare, and their ephemeral documentation demand so-called "mass salvage collecting" actions.[32] As in contemporary collecting, RRC reverses the normative collecting procedures prioritising the act of collecting than the evaluation of their quality as heritage documentation. Although unavoidable, considering the rapidity and immediacy of the events and museums' response, this procedure often leads to vast and diverse collections that professionals struggle to evaluate and manage,[33] jeopardizing not only the long-term sustainability of the collections[34] but even more the effectiveness of the practice itself.

All these pivotal reconsiderations around the very concept and content of museum collecting have naturally imposed new requirements and directions in contemporary curatorial practices. One of these pivotal shifts to the profession has admittedly been the augmented social aspect. "A contemporary collector should be part cultural anthropologists, folklife expert, sociologist […] social and cultural historian," Rhys mentions reflecting on the shift in the curatorial practice in the U.S. between 1960-1980.[35] And indeed, the requirements of collecting momentaneous material with such proximity to contemporary society, as described above, falls beyond the rigid academic thinking of traditional curatorial models and the remote professional figure with no direct interaction with society.[36] Above academics, contemporary curators ought to be informed and active citizens. Since the birth of the practice, the need for more personal involvement and active participation in contemporary events was apparent, with curators establishing broader networks and attending protests for authentic and representative collecting.[37]

Emphasising the collection of the authentic and raw experience and the immediate reaction on behalf of the curators become more apparent within Rapid Response Collecting. Its close relation to ephemeral contemporary phenomena and their endangered culture

[32] Ibid., 57.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Rhys and Baveystock, *Collecting the contemporary*, 80.
[35] Rhys, *Contemporary collecting*, 61-63.
[36] Rhys and Baveystock, *Collecting the contemporary*, 468.
[37] Rhys, *Contemporary collecting*, 58.

intensifies the need for a proactive collecting reaction over the fear of losing valuable information and the emphasis on the human experience.[38] This direct engagement with personal trauma has generated major debates amongst curators regarding the emotional responsibilities and limits of painful collecting.[39]

However, regardless of the debates and the new emerging challenges and requirements, Contemporary and Rapid Response Collecting hold great opportunities for contemporary museums providing the grounds for more socially active, responsive and relevant institutions open to the public. The connection between contemporary collecting and society is reflected in all the parts of the collecting process briefly mentioned above. From the nature of the collected items to the emerging figure of contemporary curators, it becomes clear that contemporary collecting serves much more than a recording tool of contemporary society but generates a radical reconsideration of museums as institutions emphasising their role as social agents.

Nowadays, the increasing demands for museums to further invest in their social role, respond to and address contemporary issues has become prominent within the museological world. As the climax of these requests can be considered the controversial suggestion of the new museum definition in 2019, which was also criticised for over-emphasising on the social aspects of museums.[40] However, the COVID-19 pandemic signified a new era within which requests for responsiveness, relevance and social agency were not just growing tendencies but necessities.

2.2. Rapid Response Collecting during COVID-19

The expectation for museums to respond and adapt their practices has become even more apparent during COVID-19. With their doors closed, limited resources and under the uncertainty of the pandemic crisis, the adoption of new ways of function was no more a matter of an institutional choice but of survival. And within this dilemma between what museums *wish* and what they *need* to do, contemporary collecting was a one-way path. An increasing number of museums acknowledging the historical importance of the pandemic, initiated

[38] Debono, "Collecting pandemic phenomena," 180.
[39] After the 9/11 events, for example, curators expressed their distress "facing raw emotions of the moment" and debated weather dealing with the phycological state of their audience falls under their professional responsibility. Rhys and Baveystock, *Collecting the contemporary*, 430.
[40] Helena Robinson, "Debating the 'museum': a quantitative content analysis of international proposals for a new ICOM museum definition," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27, no. 11, (2021): 1174, https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2021.1960886.

campaigns to document this unprecedented world crisis, against which RRC served as the most adequate methodology.

Even though RRC was already known as a collecting strategy from the beginning of the 21st century, COVID-19 took the practice to the next level. Never has been a phenomenon with such a global impact widely accepted as a historical moment for humanity. "It is rare to be so aware of a significant moment when you're living through it, but this is a season of vast change," stated Peggy Monahan, the director of content development at the Oakland Museum of California, reflecting the unified view over pandemic.[41] The pandemic crisis resulted in an unforeseen adaptation of RRC by many museums around the world, aiming, on the one hand, to preserve the memory of this historical moment and, on the other, to stay relevant and serve society during these turbulent times. Even the International Council of Museums, responding to the challenges of the museum function during the pandemic, specifically suggested RRC as an approach to "enrich their collections, [...] while also preserving knowledge and memories for future generations."[42]

RRC during COVID took two main directions: a) targeted collection of selected material based on institutional decisions and b) small-scaled or large-scale crowdsourcing collecting projects via public open calls.[43] The application of these collecting approaches within the context of RRC during the COVID-19 pandemic presented benefits and disadvantages.

Crowdsourcing is "the act of taking work once performed within the organisation and outsourcing it to the general public through an open call for participants" and is a common contemporary collecting approach.[44] The popularity of crowdsource collecting, especially for the documentation of personal stories, dramatically increased during COVID due to the practical limitations of the pandemic. The number of story-telling collection initiatives presented in the IFPH's mapping of public history projects verifies this tendency.[45]

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[41] Cascone, "'People are unaware of their history'."
[42] ICOM, "Museums and COVID-19: 8 steps to support community resilience," accessed June 6, 2022, https://icom.museum/en/covid-19/resources/museums-and-covid-19-8-steps-to-support-community-resilience/.
[43] For the purpose of this thesis, small-scaled crowdsourcing collecting projects refer to open call initiatives targeted to specific themes or communities, whereas large-scaled projects to open call initiatives addressed to large numbers of public such as the inhabitance of a city.
[44] Crowdsourcing programs in museums and cultural organisations are gradually increasing especially in large digitisation task which museums often outsource to the general public. Mia Ridge, *Crowdsourcing our cultural Heritage*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2014), 1.; However, such approaches have been a tool in the hands of museums in the context of contemporary collecting initiatives. Despite the admittedly delayed collecting response of the London Transport Museum regarding the 7/7 attacks, the museum finally decided to collect people's experience through a blog channel. Rhys and Baveystock, *Collecting the contemporary*, 457.
[45] International Federation for Public History, "Mapping public history."

Furthermore, crowdsourcing was used to collect the pandemic's overwhelming material culture, which museums had difficulties accessing. To that end, public calls asked the people to preserve potential documentation or send personal material reflecting their experiences. Masks, gloves, photographs, personal items, or even shopping lists and screenshots were regarded as invaluable first-hand documentation that museums urged to preserve.[46] This collecting direction allowed museums to acquire a diverse and multilayered corpus of documentation reflecting the pandemic holistically and inclusively, an objective high in museums' agendas due to the under-documented previous pandemics.[47]

Extensive open calls collecting projects were recorded mainly in museums with a social or historical orientation, such as the Museum of the city of New York or the Hague Historical Museum, both calling the public to donate any documentation relating to the pandemic.[48] However, RRC initiatives were recorded in art museums as well, such as the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, which launched the *Getty Challenge* through social media, asking the public to recreate famous works of art with ordinary objects during self-quarantine.[49] On the other hand, the Resilience Project in MOMus, the museum of Photography in Greece, aimed to create a digital archive of public artistic responses to the pandemic expressing interest in their further use in the organisation's programs (exhibitions, research).[50]

Opposing the fast and mass collecting strategy and the extensive involvement of the public in the collecting process, some museum professionals supported that RRC, especially in crises, should take a more targeted and calmer direction. "Take time, breath and act as safely as you can," notes Elli Miles, Curator at the London Transport Museum, commenting on the distinction between *rapid* and *fast* collecting.[51] This approach could ensure a more rational evaluation of possible acquisitions, depending on the museums' capabilities and ambitions,

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[46] Charlotte Coates, "How and why museums are collecting COVID-19 stories," *blooloop*, May 27, 2020, https://blooloop.com/museum/in-depth/museums-documenting-pandemic/; Lefrak, "The Smithsonian."
[47] Laura Spinney, "What are COVID archivists keeping for tomorrow's historians?," *nature*, December 17, 2020, https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-03554-0.
[48] Diana Budds, "What the museum of 2020 may look like: Curators and archivists on the items they've collected from the pandemic year," *Curbed*, April 15, 2021, https://www.curbed.com/2021/04/museums-collecting-covid-19-pandemic.html?regwall-newsletter-signup=true#_=_; "Ready for the first historical museum exhibit on Covid-19? Hague show opens next month," *NL Times*, November 29, 2020, https://nltimes.nl/2020/11/29/ready-first-historical-museum-exhibit-covid-19-hague-show-opens-next-month.
[49] Debono, "Collecting pandemic phenomena," 184; Sara Barnes, "People recreate works of art with objects found at home during self-quarantine," *My Modern Met*, May 24, 2020, https://mymodernmet.com/recreate-art-history-challenge/.
[50] "MOMus Resilience Project: Art comforting COVID-19," MOMus, accessed September 18, 2022, https://res.momus.gr/en/.
[51] Debono, "Collecting pandemic phenomena," 183.

and safeguard the well-being of the museum professional.[52] For example, the People's History Museum in Manchester attempted to critically evaluate the situation and create a plan fitting the museum's future intentions.[53]

In either case, RRC during COVID proved a difficult task to undertake. Responding to the necessity and lack of experience in contemporary collecting practices, major museums and cultural associations such as the London Transport Museum and Museums Development North West published reports and statements regarding contemporary collecting practices and collection management, challenges, and tips for museums.[54] Adding to the already unresolved challenges of contemporary collecting COVID-19 revealed new ones. Except for the practical limitations, collecting generated fundamental ethical challenges for museums. For instance, medical equipment such as masks, ventilators, vaccine ampules, COVID-test, etc., was on top of the museums' requests. Nevertheless, as these materials were invaluable tools during the pandemic battle, their acquisition was impossible.[55] Collecting human testimonies also raised controversial responses, as curators often underscored the complexities and emotional impact of recording traumatic experiences. Ethical issues concerning the limits of collecting, the level of empathy curators need to demonstrate, and the psychological distress this process might generate have been reflected upon and, in many cases, led to questioning the effectiveness of the practice.[56]

This brief description gives a small taste of the complexities of collecting COVID-19 and the level of preparedness and flexibility the museums were required to demonstrate in their collecting practices and policies. Now, in the aftermath of everything –hoping this pandemic is over– a more careful evaluation is in order. There is no doubt that RRC resulted in radical adaptations regarding many aspects of the collecting process, from the way museums collected and the curator's role to the actual material acquired.

As mentioned in the introduction, Simon Knell suggests that periods of crises could generate permanent changes in the ways they function, followed by a conceptual

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[52] Atkinson, "How are museums."
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ellie Miles, Susanna Corder, Jen Kavanagh, *Contemporary collecting: An ethical toolkit for museum practitioners*, London Transport Museum, 2020; Museum Development North West and Jen Kavanagh, *Contemporary collecting toolkit*, Museum Development North West, 2019.
[55] Lefrak, "The Smithsonian."
[56] Tory Schendel in her article "Stewardship and COVID-19: The preservation of human experience" gives her own reflection in collecting human experience during COVID emphasising the severe emotional impact this procedure could have to the museum professionals. Tory Schendel, "Stewardship and COVID-19: The preservation of human Experience," *Collections: A Journal for Museums and Archives Professionals* 17, no. 3 (2021): 274-283, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1550190620981028.

reconsideration of their identity.[57] Projecting this argument to the current time, it only seems natural that after COVID, a new world could await the museological field. This extensive engagement with RRC could open "new paths" and opportunities both for the practice and museums' role within society. But which are these new paths? And which are the key factors that will eventually lead us to future museums?

[57] Knell, *Museums*, 4-12.

3. Case Studies

The examination of the impact of RRC on museums will be based on three indicative case studies representing the two main approaches the practice took during the pandemic. Rijksmuseum Boerhaave represents the first category of the targeted collection based on institutional decisions, while the Amsterdam Museum took the direction of crowdsourcing collecting via online open call. The Museum of London, on the other hand, chose a combination of the two, launching both targeted collections and small and large-scale crowdsourcing initiatives. The diversity in the collecting approaches demonstrated by these institutions provides an ideal basis for the present research aiming to discover the future of museums in the post-COVID era.

In the following sections, each case study will be presented separately. All the information presented below is based on interviews conducted with Bart Grob, contemporary curator in the Boerhaave, Erol Boon, editor and principal manager of the COVID collecting project *Corona in de Stad* in the Museum of Amsterdam, and Beatrice Behlen, curator and project leader of *Collecting COVID* in the Museum of London and do not constitute personal comments of the author. Information deriving from secondary literature regarding the museums' initiatives is clearly stated in footnotes. The semi-structured interviews focused on the institutions' initiatives (collected material, collecting procedures, reasons behind their initiatives), the evaluation of their RRC approaches, the challenges they encountered and positive outcomes through their engagement with the practice. Following the presentation of the interview findings, the results will be compared and discussed, reflecting the opportunities and challenges of RRC during the pandemic.

3.1. Rijksmuseum Boerhaave

Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, the Dutch National Museum of the History of Science and Medicine based in Leiden, was officially established as a national institution in 1947 and holds a rich and expanding collection of scientific objects. Historically, Boerhaave has been praised for its quality, and in 2019, it was elected the European Museum of the year for its collections and approaches to presenting and communicating scientific issues to the broader public.[58] The

[58] "Museum Boerhaave," Wikipedia, accessed May 27, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Museum_Boerhaave.

museum had a long previous experience regarding contemporary collecting, starting in 2014. However, during the pandemic, the practice took on a predominant role in the institution's plan. The information presented below is based on a personal interview with Bart Grob, curator of the museum, conducted on March 9, 2022, at Rijksmuseum Boerhaave. The curator provided invaluable information about the museum's engagement with contemporary collecting and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1.1 Boerhaave and Contemporary Collecting

To increase the museum's relevance to current scientific developments and its impact on the public, Boerhaave considered contemporary collecting a pivotal element of its refurbishment. "If subjects are in the news, if they are talked about, then we have to collect them and show them," Grob stated. Even so, the lack of previous experience and the practice's complexities led the museum not to formulate a new contemporary collecting strategy or radically transform its policies but rather build its contemporary collecting strategy on the existing collection, filling its gaps and preventing future ones by reflecting on current developments. "If you build on what you have, you can have 90% of contemporary sighs," mentioned Bart Grob, highlighting the long-term effectiveness of the museum's approach.

However, although the museum uses its permanent collection as its starting point for contemporary acquisitions, its engagement with contemporary collecting and its challenges has illustrated the need for radical ideological reconsiderations on multiple levels. Starting with the curatorial practice, Bart Grob underscored its difference from the traditional norms. Collecting contemporary developments requires his immediate connection with society, an active network far beyond the museum world, including companies producing scientific products which can provide the museums with their items.

> "They [meaning his colleagues] rely on historical or scientific literature [...] I rely on what's on Twitter, on what's on news pages. My sources and contacts are CEOs of companies," he states.

Most importantly, contemporary collecting generated a significant shift in the museum's view of the concept of contemporary collections. "[…] we as curators have to look differently at the status of objects than we used to do," Bart Grob mentioned when discussing the issue. Facing the unstable long-term sustainability of contemporary material, especially compared to

Boerhaave's historical collections, the museum realised that the status of contemporary objects cannot be static as they reflect ongoing phenomena that have not yet been evaluated most of the time. The fundamental concept behind the museum's new attitude towards museum items is *object biographies*!

The concept of object biography is not new to museological circles but derives from Igor Kopytoff's anthropological theory, which examines objects as they circulate within different social contexts.[59] Projecting Kopytoff's biographical approach to the museological theory, items are not regarded as static entities when removed from their original context and entering the museum. On the contrary, they enter a new life- circle as part of the museum's collection where their meaning and value constantly change. Through these lenses, contemporary collections are turned into flexible and elastic concepts, allowing the museum to deal with fluctuations in their significance and potential short life span. The museum holds a reluctant attitude towards determinedly deaccessioning contemporary items. They grant the items a temporary inventory number and reassess their significance within five to ten years, deciding whether they should be part of the permanent national collection.[60]

In its attempt to tackle the challenges of contemporary collecting, Boerhaave has started exploring alternative and innovative approaches to the practice. Tackling the practical challenge of collecting scientific objects in use, a reoccurring issue for the institution, the museum adopted Post-it Collecting, a strategy described by Grob as putting mental posts on objects of interest in order to be collected when the circumstances allow it. Post-it Collecting regards contemporary material more like ideas, as possible providers of useful information about current developments and not on the material as physical objects.

For Boerhaave, however, Post-it Collecting is more than a collecting strategy. As Bart Grob mentioned, yellow posts-its will be presented in the new museum's permanent exhibit representing contemporary scientific developments which the museum aspires to collect in the future. Through this process, the museum aims to present the numerous potential future material and, at the same time, the struggles of contemporary collecting. Instead of covering them, the museum chooses to display them. By turning the Post-it Collecting into an exhibit,

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[59] Igor Kopytoff, "Cultural biography of things: commoditization as process," in *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-8.

[60] This policy has proven extremely useful especially in cases where the significance or success of contemporary scientific objects change throughout the years. During the same interview Bart Grob specifically mentioned the example of the cell-cultured beef burger, a highly acclaimed research development of Dr. Mart Post from Maastricht University. The museum acquired and displayed the burger but soon after additional research disputed its scientific value to the extent that the museum debated whether it should be removed from display.

Boerhaave adopts a transparent attitude about its internal processes and struggles, which traditionally remain hidden from the public eye, reintroducing itself not just as a collection but more as a *process*; as a flexible and everchanging entity in tune with current developments.

3.1.2 Boerhaave and Rapid Response Collecting during COVID

The coronavirus outbreak ironically coincided with the temporary exhibition *Besmet* regarding the history of contagious diseases and the future virus "X," for which the World Health Organization warned in 2018.[61] After the coronavirus outbreak and the significant gaps in the documentation of previous pandemics revealed during the exhibition building, the museum felt responsible to reflect on the current health crisis. Boerhaave benefited from the lockdown period to refurbish *Besmet* by including COVID-19 material in the original design. Boerhaave's COVID collection focused on physical objects with scientific as well as social interests. Even if the already built exhibition provided a starting point for the COVID collection, in general, the museum did not set specific criteria regarding what and how it should collect. In accordance with its scientific orientation, Boerhaave followed a targeted selection of items related to the pandemic development in the Netherlands. From the acquired items, some were immediately exhibited in *Besmet,* whereas others were put in the museum's depots.

One of the most celebrated additions to the museum's collection, which was also immediately displayed, was the ampule and syringe of the first vaccination in the Netherlands. (Fig. 3) The new exhibit was presented by Jaap van Dissel, the director of the Centre for Infectious Disease Control at the National Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM) and Amito Haarhuis, director of the museum and was placed in an empty showcase initially intended to represent the "future vaccine or drug for COVID-19."[62]

Boerhaave's involvement with contemporary collecting and its challenges contributed substantially to the museum's quick response to COVID. However, regardless of any previous experience, COVID raised new challenges during the collecting process. As Mr Grob mentioned, one of the main obstacles he encountered was not the overwhelming available material (masks, medical equipment) as may be expected. The curator soon realised that the material culture of COVID-19, although vast in number, consists of a limited range of items

[61] "Besmet!," Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, accessed May 4, 2022, https://rijksmuseumboerhaave.nl/te-zien-te-doen/besmet/.
[62] "Jaap van Dissel vult lege museumvitrine," Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, accessed May 12, 2022, https://rijksmuseumboerhaave.nl/collectie/verhalen/besmet/jaap-van-dissel-vult-lege-museumvitrine/.

that "have the same meaning." The challenge was choosing and finding those items carrying the most impactful message and, of course, the most relevant for the museum and its audience. In accordance with the pandemic's complex nature, the museum aspired to highlight the scientific and social aspects of COVID-19 equally. This resulted in an unexpected expansion of the museum's quest for objects with no solid scientific but also social significance. Indicative examples were a biodegradable face mask made of rice paper,[63] a knitted facemask and the museum's first-ever digital acquisition of a cartoon, all items charged with strong social connotations illustrating essential issues such as pollution and climate crisis, shortage of masks and polarization.

Two of them, the knitted face mask and the cartoon, were also displayed in the exhibition. The handmade mask was created by a famous actress who, during COVID, started knitting masks for her neighbours. (Fig 4.) After watching a TV show, Bart Grob decided to pursue it to highlight the shortage of masks during the pandemic and the creative initiatives contributing to the battle against COVID-19. The item was for a long time on display in the temporary exhibition *Besmet* and was even placed alongside scientific items at the beginning of the exhibition to indicate the dual nature of the pandemic as both a scientific and social phenomenon. (Fig. 5) However, its value was diminished over time, and it was eventually removed from display.

The first digital-born item in Boerhaave's history was a cartoon by Maarten Wolterink depicting the Pfizer vaccine as a display at the museum. (Fig. 6) This acquisition wished to reflect on social issues of misinformation, fake news and polarisation during the pandemic. In the artwork, the vaccine is depicted as a museum display with two labels underneath. The label on the left describes the first vaccination in the Netherlands, while the right one reads: "For wappies. The chip use: Solar Gates power,"[64] and details about the size and weight of the ampule. A fact worth mentioning is that Mr Grob's initial intention was, as he put it, to collect

[63] During the pandemic, Marianne de Groot- Pons, a graphic designer inaugurated the company Marie Bee Bloom producing biodegradable face masks from rice paper and filled with flower seeds. Observing the ecologic damage surgical masks could cause to, Bloom decided to Create sustainable and eco-friendly face masks which turn into flowers when planted after use. Shawn Mcnulty- Kowal, "These biodegradable face masks made from rice paper can be planted helping you and the planet breath freely," *Yanko Design*, November 3, 2021, https://www.yankodesign.com/2021/03/11/these-biodegradable-face-masks-made-from-rice-paper-can-be-planted-helping-you-and-the-planet-breathe-freely/.

[64] Original text in Dutch: "Voor Wappies. De gebruikte chip: Solar Gates power." (Translate by the author). The word *wappie* is Dutch slang term non translatable in English used to describe someone intoxicated by drugs. "Wappie", Wiktionary, accessed September 10, 2022, https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/wappie; During the pandemic the term *viruswappie* was associated with people who denied the severity of the pandemic and supported conspiracy theories behind its existence. "Viruswappie", Wiktionary, accessed September 10, 2022, https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/viruswappie.

"the original," meaning the first physical drawing of the artwork, but Maarten Wolterink is not drawing on paper anymore. Eventually, the cartoon was collected as a PDF and immediately displayed as a printed image together with the actual first vaccine in the Netherlands, which remains until today. (Fig. 7)

However, the targeted collection of material led by the museum's specific interests and previous collections did not mean an easy and smooth collecting process. The fluctuating value of COVID material culture was a challenge Bart Grob particularly underscored. For example, Mr Grob pursued the experimental COVID tests detecting the virus through breathing. Although presented as innovative and promising, the tests did not have the expected success, and the museum eventually decided not to collect them. This experience, as Bart Grob mentioned, raised ethical debates around how the museum should document the pandemic and what are the consequences of its decisions. "Do you collect only successes or failures as well… How many storage places do you need then?" he wonders.

Gaining access to the material was also challenging in pandemic times. Items such as the first vaccine were difficult to get as the location and date of the first vaccination were kept secret. The museum eventually needed to contact people from the *Gemeentelijke Gezondheidsdienst* (GGD) to ensure that the vaccine would not be thrown away. The collection of the vaccine and other medical equipment raised ethical considerations as well. Should the museum acquire a full or an empty vaccine bottle? Should the museum collect items in shortage vital for the battle against the pandemic?

Overall, through its engagement with contemporary collecting Rijksmuseum Boerhaave has invested more in a flexible and everchanging perception of contemporary collections without jeopardising the status of its historical ones and has found new ways of dealing with practical and ethical issues of contemporary collecting. This redirection towards contemporary collecting has proven beneficial for RRC during the pandemic, preparing the museum for such an initiative. However, COVID revealed new practical and ethical challenges. By choosing a small-scale targeted collection of COVID material, Boerhaave aspired to remain aligned with the institution's scientific orientation. However, the unique pandemic circumstances led the museum to explore new possibilities in its acquisitions and make pivotal decisions regarding how this pandemic will be remembered through its collections.

3.2. Amsterdam Museum

The following case study is the COVID collection of the Amsterdam Museum, a museum dedicated to the history of the city of Amsterdam. Since its inauguration in 1926, the museum has formed a large and diverse collection of more than 100.000 historical and contemporary objects representing the city's history, most of which can be accessed online on the museum's website.[65] During the pandemic, opposing the Boerhaave and the targeted collection strategy, the museum of the city of Amsterdam launched an online open call project under the name *Corona in de Stad* (Corona in the City). The information presented below is based on an interview with Erol Boon, the main editor and leader of the project, held on March 11, 2022, in Amsterdam, who provided valuable insights into the procedures followed during the collecting process as well as his reflection on the effectiveness of the endeavour.

In Amsterdam Museum, contemporary collecting was always part of the official agenda through collecting physical or photographic documentation of significant periods of the city or even through targeted commissions aiming to build an inclusive and polyphonic collection.[66] However, the museum has never undertaken such a massive collecting project as *Corona in de Stad*. The museum's response was immediate, and by May 15, the website was ready to receive public submissions reflecting the COVID-19 experience of Amsterdammers. Everything, from photographs and videos to soundscapes and texts, was collected as documentation of the history of Amsterdam during the pandemic and immediately became part of the museum's digital collection.[67]

Corona in de Stad can be divided into two parts: the digital collection, where all the public submissions are stored and documented, and the digital exhibition on the museum's website, where a selected part of the collection is curated and presented to the public. (Fig. 8, 9) Both the collection and the exhibition became directly available online for people to navigate through. In the museum's description of the digital exhibition *Corona in de Stad* is presented as a "living, growing exhibition," "an audio platform where every week a team of guest curators and museum employees […]" place a selection of the COVID collection in thematic digital

[65] "Amsterdam Museum," Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amsterdam_Museum; "Image collection," Amsterdam Museum, accessed May 4, 2022, https://www.amsterdammuseum.nl.
[66] "Collection," Amsterdam Museum, accessed May 4, 2022, https://www.amsterdammuseum.nl/en/info/collection
[67] "Corona in the City: About the exhibition," Amsterdam Museum, accessed May 4, 2022, https://www.coronaindestad.nl/en/about-the-exhibition/

rooms.[68] These digital rooms highlight different aspects of the pandemic experience under umbrella themes such as *Sound of Silence*, a digital room presenting photographs of empty clubs.[69] (Fig. 10) *Corona in de Stad* has received more than 3.000 submissions, shedding light on different aspects of the COVID experience in Amsterdam, building a unique and vast collection for present and future audiences. As Erol Boon commented at the beginning of the project, these rooms were increasing almost every week, however, through time, the renewal of the rooms as well as the public submissions decreased. Since *Corona in de Stad* had a particular thematic orientation, and as this pandemic is hopefully heading towards its end, according to Erol Boon, the museum aspires to end the project in May 2022, on the two-year anniversary of its launch.

As previously mentioned, *Corona in de Stad* includes two parts: the collection and the exhibition, both available online. This intriguing duality of the project reveals the museum's mission behind this initiative to a) document COVID as a historic event for future generations and b) actively support the people of Amsterdam by providing an alternative portal of communication and expression. The first objective was achieved through the vast and diverse collection formed through *Corona in de Stad*. Using the human experience as a starting point, the museum managed to build an essential corpus of material and eventually form the cultural memory of this challenging period.[70] On the other hand, the immediate presentation of the material to the online exhibition reflects the museum's aspiration to actively contribute to the relief of the current public experiencing COVID and help its audience make sense of this unique time. In our communication, Erol Boon extensively commented on the massive reaction of the public after the open call. This immediate response and the diverse submissions reflected the people's "fundamental urge to express themselves in order to understand it [the pandemic]," and *Corona in de Stad* created a shared ground where everyone could share their experience while ensuring the museum's contact with its public.

In principle, the museum accepted every submission relating to COVID, however, on rare occasions, material was rejected due to its dominant commercial content. As Erol Boon notes, new submissions would be edited (correcting spelling mistakes, tagging, documenting) and then published to the collection. Editing did not alter the content of the submissions and was occasionally limited in correcting spelling or grammatical mistakes to preserve their

[68] Ibid.
[69] "Sound of silence," Amsterdam Museum, accessed June 10, 2022, https://www.coronaindestad.nl/en/zaal/expositions/sound-of-silence-en/.
[70] "Corona in the city: About," Amsterdam Museum.

"idiosyncratic" character. At the beginning of the open call, the museum did not provide any guidelines regarding the themes of the material, leaving the public free to submit anything they wanted. Only later, when a large part of the collection was formed, the museum reflected on its content identifying its gaps and then published specific preferences on the website asking for material reflecting on specific issues such as poverty, religion, protests from the deniers of the pandemic or reaching out to specific organisations, artists or curators to submit relevant material.

The contribution of these external organisations, *partners* as they call them, was vital to the collecting process. According to Erol Boon, these partners (artists, cultural institutions or guest curators) could contribute in two ways to the project: a) by submitting their own work and creating a room in the digital exhibition or b) create a digital room focused on a specific theme with existing material from the museum's collection, for example, the room *Faith and Hope* curated by Ilias Zian and Fouad Lakbir.[71] The museum has always supported this participatory strategy by initiating collaborations with partners. However, as Mr Boon highlighted, *Corona in de Stad* resulted in many new connections forming a multilayered collection and broadening its visibility and influence in different audiences through its partners.

This expanded outreach of *Corona in de Stad* was also leveredged by the museum's total investment in digital infrastructures. Collecting and presenting digital material facilitated the constant update of the collection and the exhibition. Simple digital procedures were vital to the project's success, especially concerning public submissions. People willing to share their personal material could follow the submission steps independently without the museum's interference, limiting the practicalities of collecting during the pandemic.[72] Relying on this flexible and automatic collecting process, the museum could focus less on acquiring and more on managing and reflecting on its collection, filling its gaps with more targeted collecting approaches. "You gain material that you would never ask for," said Mr Boon, reflecting on the collecting results. Focusing more on the management of the collection and its direct presentation on the museum's website, the museum offered the public a constantly updated digital environment. However, despite the benefits of this digital crowdsourcing approach, it also generated multiple debates regarding the long-term historical value and use of the collection, as well as the level of institutional intervention in the process.

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[71] "Faith and hope: Corona in the city," Amsterdam Museum, accessed June 10, 2022, https://www.coronaindestad.nl/en/zaal/expositions/faith-and-hope/.
[72] "Corona in the city: Rules for submissions," Amsterdam Museum, accessed May 5, 2022, https://www.coronaindestad.nl/en/rules-for-submissions/.

Reflecting on issues regarding the long-term effectiveness of the open call method, Erol Boon stated: “I do not know if you can speak about a quality.” And indeed, although the quantity of submissions reveals the project’s appeal, the quality of the material as historical evidence could be questioned. Erol Boon noticed that occasionally the submissions were monolithic and one-sided. More than 50% of the pictures, for example, were depictions of the empty city during lockdown, which was not beneficial regarding the diversity the museum was aspiring to get in its collection and jeopardised the long-term significance of every individual submission. Of course, the museum initiated commissions and public calls for specific themes to fill possible gaps in the documentation, but still, the control over the quality of the material was not totally on the museum.

On the other side, however, this control shift towards the public or the collaborating partners over the museum’s collection does not mean its neutrality. Even in crowdsourcing collecting processes, the final assessment and interpretation of the public submissions lie within institutional decisions. The museum decides what is relevant and meaningful and, by extension, what has the most long-term historical value. As Erol Boon himself admits:

> “What appears to be neutral and uninterrupted is not true. There are a lot of curatorial decisions behind what is highlighted, what partners you choose, the wording of the open call, in open calls that ask for specific themes.”

To conclude, *Corona in de Stad,* divided into the online collection and exhibition, was essential to documenting and preserving the COVID experience in Amsterdam. Examining the coronavirus pandemic focused on human experience, it collected vast digital material through public submissions and targeted commissions. Investing in the digital infrastructure, the museum created a flexible and adjustable environment for the collection and the exhibition in which the former could easily be managed and the latter constantly updated following the current issues. This initiative resulted in both positive and debatable outcomes for the museum’s function and collecting strategy. The expansion of the museum's audiences through multiple collaborations, the increase of its relevance and the strengthening of its relation to the public are some benefits of *Corona in de Stad*. On the other hand, the crowdsourcing collecting strategy toward the public and the museum’s partners raises crucial questions regarding the long-term quality of the collection and the museum’s positionality in the collecting process.

3.3. Museum of London

The third and final case study the present thesis will discuss is the collecting activity of the Museum of London. Established in 1976, the museum owns a vast corpus of collections following the history of the city of London from Prehistoric times to the present day.[73] Contemporary collecting and, to an extent, RRC was always included in the museum's agenda, however, COVID-19 took its initiatives to a large-scale extent that the museum had never undertaken before. As early as April 2020, a month after the announcement of the first lockdown in the UK, the Museum of London launched the *Collecting Covid* project, a RRC initiative aiming to document the pandemic experience in the city. *Collecting Covid* accepted a wide range of tangible, intangible, and digital materials "to tell future generations what it was like to live in London during the pandemic."[74] Beatrice Behlen, senior curator of Fashion and Decorative Arts and project leader of *Collecting Covid,* provided the following information about this extensive and complex contemporary collecting project in a personal online interview on April 7, 2022.

Since the coronavirus outbreak, the Museum of London acknowledged its historical importance and obligation to document it. In 2018, the museum organised "Disease X" exhibition on the history of epidemics in London following the World Health Organization's warning about a future pandemic.[75] During the process, the lack of documentation of previous contagious diseases, ironically like in the case of the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, became apparent. In light of the COVID-19 events, the museum understood the dire need to act as soon as possible, and one week after the first lockdown, the museum's curators brainstormed about their response.

Collecting Covid took two directions: targeted collecting projects where museum curators pursued to acquire specific material and a public call addressing Londoners to suggest personal items for the museum to acquire reflecting their personal experiences. Combining the two approaches, the museum aspired to create a representative and multilayered collection of the COVID experience in London with "first-hand experiences […] reflecting the voices […]

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[73] "Our organization, our story," Museum of London, accessed May 15, 2022, https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/about-us/our-organisation.
[74] "Why are we #CollectingCOVID?," Museum of London, accessed May 15, 2022, https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections/about-our-collections/enhancing-our-collections/collecting-covid/why-are-we-collectingcovid.
[75] "Disease X: London's next epidemic?," Museum of London, accessed May 15, 2022, https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london/whats-on/exhibitions/disease-x.

of a broad range of Londoners.[76] The museum decided to focus on three primary parameters: a) the physical changes of the city, b) working life and the transition online, and c) young people.[77]

In its attempt to document the pandemic experience from different perspectives, the Museum of London dared to explore new and creative collecting methods. *Going Viral* and *Guardians of Sleep* were two innovative projects led by Foteini Aravani worth reflecting on. *Going Viral* was dedicated to collecting 'viral tweets' (shared or liked at least 30.000 times) of Londoners during the first lockdown.[78] The Museum of London, in collaboration with Twitter, collected 30 tweets capturing "people's bare emotions and frustrations."[79] (Fig. 11, 12) The museum has been collecting social media content since 2012 and the Olympic games. According to Mrs Aravani, social media dominate everyday activity capturing the dynamic contemporary society and development. Their collection allows museums to collect current events as they unfold and not retrospectively and build representative documentation of human experience and often neglected unofficial narratives, challenges that contemporary curators have extensively addressed.[80]

As a newly explored field, collecting social media raised unresolved practical challenges. As Foteini Aravani has stated, the collected tweets were acquired as static images (screenshots), a medium which cannot capture the "nature of the platform, interactivity, comments."[81] Ethical issues around the users' consent and reusability of the tweets were also critical in the collecting process.[82] Even if a more detailed investigation of social media collecting does not fall under the purpose of the present research, it is an exciting field that,

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[76] "Museum for London: Collecting COVID," Museum of London, April 23, 2020, accessed May 17, 2022, https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/discover/museum-for-london-collecting-covid?utm_source=facebookcollectingcovid2304&utm_medium=org_social_media&utm_campaign=collectingcovid&fbclid=IwAR0vGPK3pXpGE1TKz0WGNZ3ecUdpQMWnvrrc5inbUXXG_KcyQW_We5JYk-4.

[77] The official announcement of the collecting initiative on the museum website reads: "The museum is keen to focus on three strands of collecting: how the physical spaces in the city have been transformed – from a bustling metropolis to hushed streets - while the social and working lives of many have moved digital; the effects on key and home workers, and how children and young people are reacting to and coping with the changes now that many schools are closed." Ibid.

[78] Foteini Aravani, "The new museum' s personality: Digital collecting as a way to democratize museums," *The Garage Journal,* August 24, 2021, https://thegaragejournal.org/en/gj-media/comments/8.

[79] Joe Pinkstone, "Hilarious tweets from lockdown are immortalized by the Museum of London to show how 'a British sense of humour and sarcasm helped people cope with the pandemic'," *Mail Online,* January 28, 2021, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-9194023/Hilarious-tweets-lockdown-immortalised-Museum-London.html; "Museum of London acquires 'viral' Tweets for Collecting COVID," Museum of London, January 28, 2021, accessed May 7, 2022, https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/news-room/press-releases/museum-london-acquires-tweets.

[80] Aravani, "The new museum's personality."

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

especially after its rise during the pandemic, could open new opportunities for contemporary collecting.

Guardians of Sleep was a small-scale crowdsourcing initiative in collaboration with the Museum of Dreams at Western University in Canada, aiming to collect Londoners' dreams during the pandemic. "What I wanted to capture was the experience that possibly the pandemic is not only affecting our conscious lives but also our subconscious, our dream life," says Foteini Aravani.[83] Dreams were collected via online interviews in audio or video between volunteers and psychoanalysts and documented without any further scientific analysis or interpretation. These testimonies were counted as primary sources of the pandemic experience and will be available to future researchers and historians.[84] *Guardians of Sleep* constitutes a milestone for the museum's collecting history since dreams, as personal testimonies have never been part of its collection. Through this collecting activity, the museum looks to preserve the pandemic experience from an emotional and intimate point of view and, at the same time, motivates a more general reconsideration of the museum item.[85]

The public call for material was the second direction of *Collecting Covid*. As Mrs Behlen mentioned in the interview, the Museum of London was one of the first to ask for people's donations. The call was immediately published on TV, radio and social media, and the people's response was immediate and overwhelming. The underlying aim of *Collecting Covid* was purely institutional and not social. The museum aspired to acquire COVID items to enrich the museum's permanent collection and facilitate future research and exhibition planning. "We didn't set out to help people," Mrs Behlen mentioned. However, the public's enthusiastic response and dedication revealed the initiative's immediate effect. "I felt valued" and "I appreciate that my item was taken in" were some of the responses in the small-scale project post evaluation. "Maybe they trust the museum," Mrs Behlen said, "[maybe] they think we can help them make sense of this weirdness."

Practically, the collecting procedure entailed three main stages: a) the public suggestions via email, b) the evaluation of the objects and the acceptance or denial of the

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[83] Nicolas Davis, "Museum of London asks Londoners for Covid pandemic dreams," *The Guardian*, November 26, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/26/museum-of-london-asks-londoners-for-covid-pandemic-dreams; More information about the project and the stories collected could be found in the website of the Museum of Dreams: "The guardians of sleep: The Museum of Dreams podcast," The Museum of Dreams, https://www.museumofdreams.org/guardians-of-sleep.

[84] Robert Dex, "The Museum of London wants your Covid pandemic dreams for Guardians of Sleep project," *Evening Standard*, November 26, 2020, https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/exhibitions/museum-of-london-dreams-coronavirus-exhibition-b79217.html.

[85] "Museum of London to collect COVID dreams," Museum of London, November 26, 2020, accessed May 17, 2022, https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/news-room/press-releases/museum-london-collect-covid-dreams.

suggestion, and c) the receiving of the objects. However, the museum soon realised that the open call initiative involved many practical difficulties, some residing in the limitations COVID imposed and some in the museums' procedures. The rapidity and complexity of the events, combined with the pressuring demands on the museum's part to act as quickly as possible, eventually led to mistakes which hindered the procedure. "If we did it again, I would have done it differently," she reflected on the open call initiative. As Mrs Behlen mentioned, mistakes in the first announcement of the public call, such as clarification of the target audience or requested material, would confuse the public and result in an abundance of public suggestions the museum did not have the capacity to collect.

Transferring and handling physical objects during the pandemic was also challenging. The museum was closed, and the people could not hand in their objects, so occasionally, object handlers would be sent to collect items slowing down the procedure. When the items would reach the museum, they needed to go into two- or three-week quarantine, delaying their examination and assessment by the museum staff. Furthermore, people would often send extra items together with their initial suggestion or in many cases, after their examination, the curators would realise the items were not what they initially thought. Copyright consent was also an issue, with many complicated procedures hindering the collecting process. Challenging was the fact that the museum does not accept digital signatures, so all the forms needed to be sent by post to the donator and then back to the museum, a process that, during a pandemic, was not easy and required much communication between the two parties.

Public engagement and communication were also problematic during the pandemic. Mrs Behlen mentioned her concerns about the collection's inclusivity and how the project managed to spread within the communities. Despite the museum's initial aspiration for broad representation, she highlighted that the responses were mainly middle-class due to the media through which *Collecting Covid* was communicated and their target audience. Although a noticeable increase in the responses for the Asian community was observed, many communities were more challenging to engage than others only through the public call.

The collecting procedure followed by the Museum of London required much communication between the curators and the people creating an intimate connection which the museum did not anticipate or indented. "People got almost into a relationship," Mrs Behlen said about the public's investment in the public call. This enhanced communication with the public, often donating sensitive items and sharing traumatic personal experiences, required an empathetic response from the curators. The museum had dealt before with people donating personal items, and emotional support was always part of the process. However, being not only

spectators but actual participants of the traumatic experience made the difference. “We were also scared and anxious ourselves,” Mrs Behlen said, highlighting the difficult task of engaging with the repercussions of COVID. Denying an item with sentimental value to the donor was a delicate issue that the museum staff also needed to confront. In some cases, unwanted items would be sent to a more suitable institution to acquire the donations, such as the Museum of the Home. Nevertheless, a balance between the professional collecting and the person experiencing a situation needed to be kept.

Reflecting on the overall experience with RRC, Beatrice Behlen focused more on its institutional impact. From her point of view, *Collecting Covid* managed to create a more intimate and direct connection between the museum and the public, developing a relationship of trust between the two parties. However, she adds that this intimate relationship was instigated by the difficult times of the pandemic, and as the pandemic reaches its end, this connection between the museum and the public would be hard to maintain. On the contrary, the project and its challenges had a catalytic effect on the museum itself. Thanks to this project, the entire department was encouraged to collaborate for the time to that extent, uncovering the rationale behind curatorial choices which had never been communicated before.

Collecting COVID generated a general self-reflection on the museum’s flexibility and efficiency. The extreme and rapidly evolving circumstances required a less complicated environment revealing malfunctions and questioning the museum’s bureaucratic procedures hindering the project's success. Nevertheless, critically reflecting on this Rapid Response project, the benefits for the museum are undeniable and could leverage the modernisation of traditional functions in the future.

4. Discussion

4.1. Reasons of collecting

The case studies of the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, the Amsterdam Museum and the Museum of London revealed that RRC initiatives revolved around two main axes: a) the historical documentation of the pandemic and b) the social relief during the difficult times of the health crisis. According to the interviews, both the Boerhaave and the Museum of London prioritised their institutional mission to collect a representative image of COVID. After detecting gaps in documentation of previous pandemics, they immediately initiated their collecting response in accordance with the museums' orientation and individual mission. Boerhaave's targeted collection of physical items presented great success, allowing the museum to reflect on the scientific aspect of the pandemic but also expand its acquisitions towards more social-related items in a controlled way. Boerhaave's previous investment and redirection towards contemporary collecting contributed to their effective response. Even though the museum did not formulate a structured strategic plan, its engagement with the challenges of contemporary collecting facilitated their rapid adjustment to the pandemic normality and eventually led to a collection aligned with the museum's needs and the pandemic requirements.

The reasons behind the RRC activities of the Museum of London and the Amsterdam Museum are worth examining comparatively due to the institutions' similar orientations. Both institutions have strong historical and social character, focusing on the history of London and Amsterdam respectively and the cities' contemporary society. However, despite their closer connection and engagement with contemporary society, especially compared to Boerhaave, the active support to the public during the pandemic was not a shared priority. The Amsterdam Museum, even though the documentation of the pandemic as a historical period was one of the principles behind their collecting activity, it also consciously focused on the therapeutic effect *Corona in de Stad* could have on society. This objective was reflected not only in the material the museum aimed for (first-hand public experience) but also in the manner of collection through the large-scale digital project digital crowdsourcing project. The flexible and easy-to-use submission procedure, facilitating the extensive contribution of the public and external partners, the exclusive collection of digital material, as well as their immediate presentation to the online exhibition reveal the museum's flexibility and adjustability to the requirements of the public and the pandemic.

The Museum of London presents a more complex collecting response than the previous institutions. Similar to the case of the Boerhaave, the institutional responsibility for

representative pandemic documentation was prioritised. This was achieved through a combination of the previously mentioned approaches of the targeted and the open call collection. In both cases, the focus was on the collection of the first-hand experience of Londoners through physical and digital documentation. As reflected in the interview findings, the small-scaled targeted collecting projects were successful leading to innovative collections such as social media and dreams. On the other hand, the open call project was proven challenging due to the museum's lack of preparedness and flexibility, which will be extensively discussed later.

Regarding the reasons behind the RRC initiative of the Museum of London, a contradiction between their overall aspiration of collecting COVID and the selected method is apparent. When asked about the museum's initial ambition of the public call, Mrs Behlen expressed her surprise at the people's investment and personal connection to the project even though out of the three examined initiatives, *Collecting COVID* initiated the most direct communication with the audience. The museum seemed to neglect the potential social contribution as well as the audience's expectations from the museum during the pandemic and was instead trapped in the institutional pressure for a quick and representational collecting reaction.

Regardless of the reasons behind the examined RRC initiatives, both methods of crowdsourcing and the targeted collection entailed opportunities and challenges, some already known in contemporary collecting and others generated by the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following section will thoroughly compare the opportunities and challenges that emerged through RRC in the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, the Amsterdam Museum and the Museum of London. At the same time, the results will be related to the existing corresponding literature placing the examined case studies within the broader context of collecting initiatives during the pandemic. In such a manner, concrete and more general conclusions will be reached regarding the impact of the extensive investment in RRC during COVID and the possible new paths this experience could open for the future of museums on a practical and conceptual level.

4.2. Opportunities of RRC during COVID

Public participation and expansion

An augmented investment to public contributions in museums' collecting procedures becomes clearer through open call crowdsourcing initiatives of the Amsterdam Museum and the Museum of London. Crowdsourcing collecting, as mentioned in section 2.2., has traditionally been used as an effective medium for contemporary collecting. Owain Rhys' research on Contemporary Collecting also demonstrates that community outreach and involvement are often-used methods in the practice, and "handing over control" of the collection outcome is, to an extent, expected from museums.[86] During COVID, an increase in crowdsourcing initiatives was documented, considering not only its benefits (facilitation of inclusivity and participation, capturing the first-hand experience of the events) but also the limitations of the pandemic (lockdown, remote working).[87] This direct public involvement in the collecting process seems to have created new dynamics between the museum and the public, with the former developing –even unwillingly– a more participatory and open collecting attitude and the latter actively contributing to and controlling the collecting result.

This newly established relationship with the public, and the sequent benefits, were not always a conscious goal and were debated by both museums. As will be more extensively examined in the following sections, Amsterdam Museum questioned the level of institutional interference in the collecting process despite giving its public a predominant role. On the other hand, the Museum of London, which did not prioritise the immediate effect of its initiatives on the public and encountered issues balancing public submissions with its institutional agenda, considered the augmented public investment and trust ephemeral, debating its durability after the pandemic. However, in both cases, the large-scale crowdsourcing projects benefitted the institutions' visibility and public engagement, especially in the case of the Amsterdam Museum, which demonstrated a dynamic expansion of its collaboration network and target audience.

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[86] Rhys, *Contemporary collecting*, 77.

[87] A brief overview of crowdsourced initiatives is presented in Tizian Zumthurm, "Crowdsourced COVID-19 collections: A brief overview," *International Public History* 4, no. 1 (2021): 77-83, https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2021-2021; In the U.K., an interesting example is the *#TheseTimes* project of the Museum of Ordinary People in Brighton. The museum invited a large number of people to keep personal journals recording their personal experiences, which later would be submitted to the museum. More information about the collecting project of the Museum of Ordinary People can be found on the museum's website: "Museum of Ordinary People," accessed June 3, 2022, https://www.museumofordinarypeople.com.

Digital innovation

The use of digital infrastructures reported a substantial expansion during COVID, supporting institutions' functions and public engagement. NEMO's 2020 survey on the impact of COVID on 48 museums inside and outside of Europe demonstrates that 4 to 5 institutions have increased their digital presence and activities and suggest that further investment in digital arenas would be beneficial.[88] Even more, qualitative analyses in the U.S. and the U.K. show that prestigious institutions such as the Smithsonian institutions and the Manchester Art Gallery invested in their digital infrastructures.[89] In terms of collecting, multiple museums have reported a turn towards digital tools to reach out to the public. An interesting example is the *Il Museo della Quarentena* digital project launched by the Tridentine Diocesan Museum in Trento, Italy. The museum limited its collecting activity to digital material, asking for photographs of personal items reflecting the public experience of quarantine via email or social media, which were later exhibited in the online exhibition on the museum's website.[90]

This digital shift is also reflected in the present research. Amsterdam Museum's decision to base its presence and entire collecting activity on digital infrastructures introduces an excellent example of museums' adaptability during COVID. Digital collecting simplified and automatised complex processes, such as copyright or acquisition, distributing the tasks between the public and the museum staff while facilitating external collaborations. Even more, the flexible online exhibition of *Corona in de Stad* allowed the museum to stay relevant to current issues through the constant renewal of its content. Especially in comparison to the Boerhaave and the Museum of London, which focused on physical material and analogical collecting procedures, the successful adaptation of the Amsterdam Museum to the limitations of COVID becomes apparent. Even more, this flexible collecting environment allowed the Amsterdam Museum to initiate new collaborations with external institutions and facilitate the expansion of its public outreach, an outcome not reported to that extent in the two other cases.

[88] Network of European Museum Organisations, *Survey*, 2-3.
[89] Lukas Noehrer et al., "The impact of COVID-19 on digital data practices in museums and art galleries in the UK and the US," *Humanities & Social Sciences Communication* 8, no. 236 (October 2021): 4-5, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00921-8.
[90] "Il Museo della Quarentena," Museo Diocesano Tridentino, accessed June 4, 2022, http://opere.lockdownmuseum.it.

Experimentation

The more controlled and small-scale collecting initiatives of *Guardians of Sleep* and *Going Viral* in the Museum of London revealed a tendency for new and innovative collections during COVID. As echoed throughout the interview, the pandemic's challenging and unknown status quo encouraged the museum curators to explore unconventional and bolder types of documentation. This experimentation is mainly reflected in the aforementioned projects, moderated by Foteini Aravani, digital curator of the Museum of London. Acknowledging the complexities of the pandemic and its severe impact on many aspects of everyday life, the two initiatives aspired to preserve unexpected angles of the COVID experience: dreams and social media.

Going Viral reflects the general rise of the museums and cultural institutions' interest in collecting social media content due to the vitality of their presence during COVID.[91] For example, the WARCnet project, published by the Department of Media and Journalism Studies School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University, presents extensive interviews with web archivists from significant institutions, such as the Library of Congress and the Dutch National Library, involved in digital collections related to COVID. In these interviews, the interest and the challenges in social media collection (copyright, preservation) are reoccurring topics.[92] As this field remains underexplored and with many complexities regarding the collection and preservation of its content, initiatives such as *Going Viral* could be beneficial in the development of the research area, allowing museums to reconsider their collections and further explore their digital collection strategies.

The targeted Rapid Response Collection of the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave facilitated the same exploratory road, expanding the museum's collection beyond scientific items to unexpected collectables of social and artistic nature. Acquisition of unconventional and non-scientific items is noted in counterpart institutions such as the Science Museum of London, which has also collected knitted face masks, such as the "Safe" mask by Su Richardson[93] or two broken wooden spoons used during the "Clap for our Carers" event.[94] Respectively,

[91] Aravani, "The new museum's personality."
[92] "WARCnet papers," Aarhus Univeristy, accessed June 5, 2022, https://cc.au.dk/en/warcnet/warcnet-papers/.
[93] "'Safe' mask by Su Richardson: Collection," Science Museum Group, accessed June 1, 2022, https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co8731642/safe-mask-by-su-richardson-mask.
[94] "'Broken wooden spoon, used to bang saucepans during the weekly 'Clap for our carers', March-May 2020: Collection," Science Museum Group, accessed June 1, 2022, https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co8732785/broken-wooden-spoon-used-to-bang-saucepans-during-the-weekly-clap-for-our-carers-march-may-2020-spoon.

Boerhaave, through acquisitions such as the biodegradable face mask, the knitted face mask and the digital cartoon, aspired to document the pandemic not only as a scientific but also as a social phenomenon and shed light on crucial issues which emerged during the pandemic. Public and artistic responses to pollution, sustainability, climate crisis, shortage of masks, polarisation and misinformation were documented and immediately addressed in the exhibition *Besmet!*

Increased social role

As supported by the existing reflections on COVID's impact on museums, their social function was amplified and centralised in their agendas.[95] This observation on the institutional augmented social role is also reflected in the present research findings. The Amsterdam Museum and the Museum of London welcomed the opportunity to alleviate the public isolation. Even in the case of the Museum of London, where the collecting project did not consciously aim at its social impact, contributing to public relief through *Collecting COVID* was considered a positive outcome. To a smaller extent, the amplified social presence is also present in the case of the Boerhaave. Even though its collecting activity did not involve the extensive connection to the public demonstrated in the first two cases, the selection of items and their immediate presentation to the *Besmet* reveals the museum's intention to critically reflect on the COVID experience by addressing and taking a position towards controversial social issues.

As previously mentioned, Boerhaave's collecting activity demonstrated a shift toward items with social connotations. The acquisition of Maarten's Wolterink digital cartoon constitutes a milestone for Boerhaave, not only as the first digital-born object in the museum's collections but also as an artistic piece with explicit social and political criticism directed at the deniers of the pandemic. Admittedly COVID generated extensive political debates. However, collecting and, most importantly, immediately presenting such items in a scientific museum suggest Boerhaave's clear positionality against societal issues and undermines any notions of museums' neutrality amongst critical societal crises.

[95] Cobley et al., "Museums," 113.

4.3. Challenges of RRC during COVID

Next to the opportunities of RRC during the pandemic, reflecting on its challenges is equally vital in exploring the image of museums in the post-COVID era. As previously mentioned, RRC as a museum practice has always entailed reoccurring challenges, many of which were also revealed during COVID. However, the pandemic's extreme circumstances revealed additional challenges reflected in the three examined case studies.

Rapid Response Collecting VS long-lasting phenomena

As mentioned in the brief presentation of RRC, the notion of the immediate response to contemporary ephemeral phenomena constitutes the cornerstone of the practice. However, this rapidity imposed by the fear of loss of valuable documentation and the difficulties in assessing the material's historical importance often leads museums to an almost fetishistic and accumulating attitude towards collecting, also described as "proliferation of heritage."[96] Similar concerns were also discussed within the context of COVID collecting, especially debating the fast collecting pace the pandemic imposed and its potential implications on the collections' quality.[97] This accumulating tendency is mostly reflected in the case of the Amsterdam Museum. The digital collection of *Corona in de Stad,* based completely on public submissions, despite positive outcomes for the museum mentioned in the previous section, revealed a problematic balance between the quality and quantity of the collection, which is extensively echoed in Erol Boon's words. His reports on the "monolithic" and repetitive submission content could put the collection's long-term sustainability in debate. Even though the massive response of the public reflects the project's appeal during the pandemic, the historical value of the collection appears to be questionable.

The implementation of Rapid Response Collecting during Covid, however, generated a new debate around the practice's effectiveness, deriving from the extensive duration of the pandemic. The RRC crowdsourcing project of *Corona in de stad* started as an immediate reaction to extensively document a phenomenon with unknown duration. Even though much of the COVID material culture was considered ephemeral, nobody could predict how long this pandemic would last, especially in its beginning. However, the extent and duration of this

[96] Morgan, "De-growing," 56.
[97] Debono, "Collecting pandemic phenomena," 183.

health crisis transformed this immediate response into an almost two-year project focused on one theme contradicting the fundamental concept of the *rapidness* of Rapid Response Collecting. The reported gradual decline of public submissions caused by corona fatigue mentioned by Erol Boon introduces a new possible debate regarding the efficiency of the practice in long-lasting phenomena and questions whether short-scale projects with a limited duration, such as *Guardians of Sleep* and *Going Viral* or Boerhaave's targeted approach could be more adequate approaches.

Lack of flexibility and preparedness

The institutions' lack of flexibility and preparedness generated severe challenges for the success of RRC during the pandemic. The Museum of London's rigid infrastructures built upon pre-COVID crowdsourcing strategies were proven insufficient for the pandemic's demands. The collecting process was time-consuming and entailed bureaucratic procedures such as copyright consent or object disinfection, which hindered and delayed the procedures. The museum attempted to maintain some control over the acquisitions by evaluating the public suggestions before adding them to the permanent collection. The museum's focus on collecting physical material made this evaluation even more challenging. The vitality of flexibility and preparedness becomes even more visible when comparing the Museum of London's open call results to the two other case studies. As mentioned before, both the Amsterdam Museum and the Boerhaave demonstrate greater success in their collecting initiatives, the former by investing in its digital infrastructures and the latter by its previous involvement with Contemporary Collecting and its more controlled collecting approach during the pandemic.

Expectations VS Reality

In the crowdsourcing collecting projects of the Amsterdam and the London Museum, a strong sense of imbalance between the expectations and the reality of the public calls is reflected. Public engagement or constructivist approaches to knowledge and memory creation are definitive elements of crowdsourcing practices,[98] utterly connecting them tightly to contemporary collecting as democratic and inclusive methods of collecting. However, through the interviews, this expectation of direct and uncensored public contribution to the museum's

[98] Ridge, *Crowdsourcing*, 235.

collections seems to be questioned. In both open call initiatives, a substantial level of institutional control is apparent. The phrasing of the public call, the selection of the medium for its publication, the selection of objects, their editing, contextualisation, and presentation are determining factors noted in both cases intervening with the collecting procedure and eventually preserving the institutional control over the range, interpretation and authenticity of public submissions and the construction of the memory of the pandemic.

For the Museum of London, for example, although the public anticipated and expressed its wish for an instant presentation of their contributions, the crowdsourcing program facilitated exclusively institutional collecting purposes, which were hindered due to the pandemic. In light of this and given the level of public investment demonstrated in the large number of submissions, people's trust in the museum could be severely affected. The Amsterdam Museum, on the other hand, although the institutional interference with the original submissions was occasionally limited to minor editing and correction of grammatical mistakes, the neutrality of the collecting process and institutional interference was also debated by Erol Boon.

Finally, another questionable issue is the level of inclusivity crowdsourcing projects can realistically achieve. Especially regarding the Amsterdam Museum, which utilised digital tools partly to achieve a more holistic and representative collection of the pandemic, at the same time limited its accessibility to groups with access to online platforms and aptitude for their use, excluding more groups such as the elderly or other vulnerable members of society.[99] The Museum of London, on the other hand, also reported difficulties in public engagement, noticing a limited scope of the respondents to the public call limited to groups with a more middle-class background.

Ethics of COVID collecting

Apart from the practical challenges of COVID collecting, ethical debates in the collecting process were also revealed by the present examination of RRC. As already briefly mentioned in section 2.2., the ethics of collecting traumatic events were a reoccurring challenge of RRC. Especially the documentation of traumatic human experiences has generated issues regarding

[99] The International Council of Museums draw museums' attention to the limitations of digital initiatives and possible ways of engaging and including digital illiterate groups to their activities. More information can be found in: ICOM, "Museums and COVID-19: 8 steps to support community resilience," accessed June 6, 2022, https://icom.museum/en/covid-19/resources/museums-and-covid-19-8-steps-to-support-community-resilience/."

the limits as well as the positionality of the curator in the collecting process. However, the extreme and intense circumstances of COVID the public and the museum professionals faced amplified these issues. In the RRC crowdsourcing project of the Museum of London, the communication between the museum curators and the public was constant, and the professionals' increased empathy towards the people was required. Even though Mrs Behlen mentioned that the museum had been involved in painful collecting before, in this pandemic, curators were not just external observers but participants of the traumatic experience; therefore, their personal limits and well-being needed to be considered and respected.

Similar discussions have also been reported in other cases. Tory Schendel, curator at the Evansville Museum of Arts, History and Science, in her article "Stewardship and Covid-19: The preservation of human experience," describes her personal engagement with Rapid Repones Collecting during the pandemic. She notes that despite her initial support for the practice, she opposes those defending that RRC should not necessarily be a future expectation for curators. Her arguments derive from the overwhelming emotional impact of collecting personal traumatic experiences. In her view, curators should set limits in engaging with painful collecting processes and protect their health over institutional intentions.[100] Furthermore, other museum professionals, such as Elli Miles, Curator at the London Transport Museum, also advocated for the security and welfare of curators and museum staff with regard to the rapidity of collecting imposed by the exhilarating advance of the pandemic.[101]

On the other hand, the targeted collection approach in Boerhaave raised different ethical questions regarding the collecting processes and the institutional control in constructing the pandemic memory. As a science museum, the ethical debate over acquiring vaccines or medical equipment during a health crisis troubled Bart Grob, who contemplated the consequences of the museum's decisions in the pandemic battle. Other major institutions, such as the Smithsonian, have also noted these issues, acknowledging the challenge of putting institutional collecting goals over the vitality of equipment such as masks, ventilators or vaccines during the pandemic.[102] On the other hand, the overwhelming pace of scientific developments during the pandemic occasionally resulted in the disproval of many items the museum expressed its interest in acquiring, such as the COVID breath test initially presented as a promising development. Eventually, its validity was disproven, and the museum cancelled the acquisition. It has been reported that other museums during the pandemic have shown

[100] Schendel, "Stewardship," 281-283.
[101] Debono, "Collecting pandemic phenomena," 183.
[102] Lefrak, "The Smithsonian."

interest in collecting failed experiments.[103] However, such decisions are definitive in constructing the pandemic memory and thusly, existing debates regarding the long-term effectiveness of Rapid Response Collections arise again.

These limitations of RRC revealed during the pandemic, although pivotal for the final assessment of the collecting responses, should not be perceived as deterrent factors from further exploration of Contemporary Collecting. Museums' abrupt engagement with Contemporary Collecting practices was an unexpected necessity during these difficult times, and considering the lack of experience, institutions attempted to react in the best ways possible. All challenges described above should leverage a more careful reconsideration of the practice itself as well as the self-reflection on behalf of the institutions, which will eventually lead to a more efficient and sustainable engagement with Contemporary Collecting. Together with RRC, Contemporary collecting is regarded as a practice vital for the institutions' relevance, credibility, transparency, and connection to the public, qualities that the pandemic brought to the centre of attention and should be further explored in the future, enriching and reinforcing museums' identity as social institutions.

[103] Spinney, "What are COVID."

5. The Post-COVID museum

Simon Kneel almost twenty years ago predicted that the future sustainability of museums lies within their ability to demonstrate flexibility in their function and relevance to the needs of the contemporary world and society. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought his aspirations very close to their realisation in a very unexpected way. On multiple levels, from collecting practices to public engagement, institutional organisation and planning, museums faced challenges they had never experienced before. Change was no longer a deliberate choice but a pressing necessity on which their future was utterly dependent. In the museums' collecting response to this health crisis, RRC was proven an invaluable tool. As the examined case studies of the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, the Amsterdam Museum and the Museum of London demonstrate, RRC in times of COVID revealed new challenges and opportunities for the institutions revealing long-lasting malfunctions in fundamental aspects of collecting procedures and, simultaneously, opening new and unexplored possibilities for their future. RRC, even briefly, generated a radical reconsideration of what a museum of our time *is* and what it *should* be and function; a reconsideration that should not be disregarded after the pandemic but used as leverage for the rise of new institutional qualities and eventually the construction of a new identity for museums in the post-COVID era. But how does this future museum look like?

The future museum is *responsive*. The unexpected outbreak of COVID caught many institutions off-guard and unequipped to tackle its challenges and fulfil the demands of the public. As reflected, especially in the case of the Museum of London, the public expectations of museums were not limited to institutional aspirations of preserving the pandemic heritage but requested a more immediate reflection of the collecting initiatives on their lives. Through the museums' initiatives, the public expected visibility, compassion for their struggle and a level of structure to their upsetting life. All these demands were, up to an extent, met through Rapid Response Collecting. The broadening of the practice scope beyond museums with historical or social orientation demonstrated how Contemporary Collecting strategies could also become an effective tool in a wider spectrum of museums enhancing their responsiveness and connection to contemporary society and its demands.

The future museum is *flexible*. From the beginning of the pandemic, museums were asked to adapt to new requirements, explore alternative ways of collecting, invest in flexible infrastructures and modernised acquisition and collection management methods, such as those provided by digital and online tools. Digital collecting initiatives such as the one suggested by

the Amsterdam Museum were proven highly beneficial for the new practical challenges during COVID in terms of the variety of documentation, management and presentation of the collections as well as their future sustainability.

On a conceptual level, towards this flexible direction of the future museum, Rijksmuseum Boerhaave seems to have many promising answers. The museum's long engagement with contemporary collecting and its challenges has generated an institutional shift adopting new perceptions of the collecting practice, museum objects and the museum in general. Focusing on ideas of object biographies and establishing innovative methods of collecting and presenting contemporary collections, such as Post-it collecting, the museum reintroduces itself as an ongoing process, adaptable to the contemporary world and transparent to the public.

The future museum is *bold* and liberated from traditional perceptions of its collections. For museums such as the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, documenting COVID in unconventional ways was vital to the collecting decisions. Considering the overwhelming material of the pandemic, the museum aimed to collect items that would distinguish their collections from other museums. This direction broadened the scope of its collections to unexpected acquisitions such as artistic public responses and the first digital-born item of the museum. Within the context of collecting human experience, the Museum of London explored new ways of documentation, such as social media and dreams. On the other hand, in the Amsterdam Museum's case, its digital documentation of the pandemic introduced a new materiality of contemporary collections liberated from physical items. All three cases demonstrate that contemporary phenomena have multiple extensions, and after the experience of collecting COVID, museums took a step forward in exploring new ways of preserving them.

The future museum is *open* and *collaborative* with the public and external partners. The increase of crowdsourcing collecting strategies and the direct involvement of the public in the collecting process created the grounds for a new dynamic between the museum and its public, where the former, without jeopardising its constitutional role as a memory and heritage institution, gave control to its audience over its collection. Safeguarding this new relationship between the two parties in the post-COVID era could reinforce trust and mutual respect among museums and the public.

Moreover, considering the practical limitations during the pandemic, actively searching for and encouraging partnerships was essential in forming representative COVID collections. The Amsterdam Museum, for example, based a significant amount of its collection on its partner institutions which were substantially increased after COVID. On the other hand,

looking to optimise its effectiveness, the Museum of London increased its level of collaboration and communication amongst its departments and perused partnerships with major organisations such as Twitter. The further investment in external partnerships and the realisation of their vitality could open new possibilities for museums' collecting activity and transform the image of museums from isolated institutions to crossroads of exploration and innovation.

The future museum is *empathetic* toward the public and its workforce. Especially for museum professionals, COVID has generated an increased sensibility regarding security and well-being in the working space. Remote working was a short-term solution during COVID. However, incorporating alternative and more flexible ways of working could potentially optimise productivity. In the case of the Amsterdam Museum, for example, the digital collecting initiative perfectly combined the pandemic's limitations with the possibilities of remote working.

On the other hand, the collection of the human experience of the pandemic revealed the dire need for museum professionals to set their personal limits in the interaction and emotional involvement they are required to demonstrate. In the case of the Museum of London, the direct connection with the public sharing intimate and often traumatic stories severely impacted the museum professionals who, as participants in this overwhelming experience, carried their own fears and concerns. This intense and extensive experience with collecting sensitive and traumatic information illuminated the need for a respectful and considerate working environment towards the personal limits of the curators and museum professionals.

Finally, the future museum is a *social agent.* The COVID-19 experience has attributed social roles which museums have never undertaken to such an extent before. With almost all sectors of public life shut down, museums, in a way, substituted social functions not available to the people anymore. As revealed through the examination of the case studies, museums, apart from preserving the memory of the pandemic through their collecting initiatives, managed to have a direct impact on the public. Intentionally or not, museums during the pandemic acted as alternative ways of communication, creative expression and relief from isolation and emotional stress. Obtaining an almost therapeutic role, they gained the trust of their audience, positioning themselves in the middle of this disaster and reminding their participation in this experience. And although these qualities became apparent during the pandemic, the level of impact museums had through their collecting initiatives is indicative of the new possibilities for them in the future.

6. Conclusion

The present thesis, identifying the extensive use of RRC during the COVID-19 pandemic as a crucial turning point for the future of museums, aspired to explore the potential new paths opened for them in the post-COVID era. Departing from Simon Knell's observations on the pivotal importance of periods of crises and the changes they might impose on museums, the two main questions this research set to examine were, firstly, *how the extensive use of RRC impacted museums' function and role within society* and consequently *to what extent it could generate a permanent reconsideration of their identity in the future*. Reflecting on the two main directions of RRC took: a) the targeted collection of items based on institutional decisions and b) small or large-scale crowdsourcing collecting projects, this thesis has managed to dive deeper into these questions reaching valuable results regarding practical adjustments imposed in the museum function as well as new qualities that arose during the pandemic. The critical examination of the RRC initiatives in the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, the Amsterdam Museum and the Museum of London revealed the opportunities and challenges of the practice during COVID. These results, combined with the existing literature on museums' initiatives in the pandemic, confirmed that the unforeseen adaptation of RRC has, indeed, opened new paths for museums and created grounds for a permanent reconsideration of their future identity.

Regarding the first question and the impact of Rapid Response Collecting, the research demonstrated that digital and online infrastructures were vital for effective collecting activity during the pandemic. Despite their limitations, the investment and further development of the digitisation of the collecting procedures could create flexible and modernised structures for a relevant and sustainable contemporary museum with a broader appeal. At the same time, the complexities of the pandemic experience encouraged experimentation in the ways of documentation, expanding the scope of the museum's collections. These new possibilities discovered during the pandemic period regarding, for example, digital-born material, social media and dream collecting constitute the starting point of new perceptions of museum collections, bolder decisions, new collaborations and expanded public outreach. Furthermore, the future museum holds a different place for museum professionals, especially regarding their limits as individuals and professionals towards institutional agendas. The predominance of the collection of human experience during the pandemic has augmented the consideration for the emotional state of the curator. Dealing with traumatic experiences could be a painful and overwhelming task that museum professionals should not feel obliged to meet. Therefore, an empathetic and respectful working environment should be emphasised in the future.

The shared experience of COVID revealed a new positionality for museums within society, reintroducing them as living and active entities. Museums were not observers of a social phenomenon to which they responded. On the contrary, they were participants in a cruel reality facing its devastating implications, struggling to survive and understand it. Within a fast-developing reality, museums acknowledged, more than ever, that every aspect of their function, from collection to presentation, and management to preservation, is an ongoing process aligned with social developments. This new positionality increased the direct social impact of their activities which were considered as opportunities for communication, creative expression, emotional support and above all, as providers of hope for the future. COVID set the grounds for a new relationship between the museum and the public based on trust and respect. This result seemed inevitable during the pandemic collecting. Although the social impact of museums' collecting initiatives was not always regarded as a primary aspiration, the public response and appreciation towards the museum demonstrated its need for active contribution and visibility. And even though the intensity of this new relationship is meant to fade, as the pandemic hopefully reaches an end, it has revealed the public's expectations regarding museums' role in society.

On the other hand, regarding the potential reconsideration of museums' identity after the pandemic, this exploration of Rapid Response Collecting during COVID led to a speculative era where museums are reinforced with new qualities and "underpinning philosophies," as Simone Knell could state. This new museum era regards Contemporary Collecting strategies as a key element to its effectiveness and sustainability, providing the grounds for a conceptual shift towards museums that are responsive and inclusive; flexible and bold; transparent and open to new collaborations, empathetic and respectful; and above all active members of the society.

After all this, it becomes clear that the COVID-19 pandemic and the adjustments museums were forced to make in their collecting strategies can not only have a short-term impact but also generate permanent reconsiderations of their future functions and roles. RRC created fertile grounds for improvement in established museum practices and, at the same time, new aspirations and requirements for the future. Of course, all these new qualities which have emerged during the pandemic should not–and cannot– be adopted definitively and extensively, as they entail limitations which ought to be considered and analysed according to the needs and capacities of each institution. However, they do create an indicative image of the new direction the society is heading and the museums' possible positionality in it.

Illustrations

Figure 1 Screenshot of the interactive map with public history projects about Covid-19, (International Federation for Public History), Screenshot Author, June 10, 2022.

Figure 2 Screenshot of the interactive map with museums' digital initiatives during the pandemic, *(Museum digital initiatives during the coronavirus pandemic*)**,** Screenshot Author, June 10, 2022.

Figure 3 Pfizer-BioNTech, *Ampoule and syringe of the firstPfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine of 6 January 2021*, 2021, Ampoule: 3.2 x 1.6, Syringe: 10 x 2.1 x 1.1, (Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, inv. no. V35179).

Figure 4 Karin Bloemen, Ace Management, *Face masked knitted by Karin Bloemen during the first wave of the Covid-19*, 2020, 1 x 27 x 16, (Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, inv. no. V35222).

Figure 5 Group display of a SARS- Cov-2 antibody, a coronavirus protein model, decorated medical clogs and knitted facemask in the exhibition Besmet, (from top left), (Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, Besmet), Photo Author.

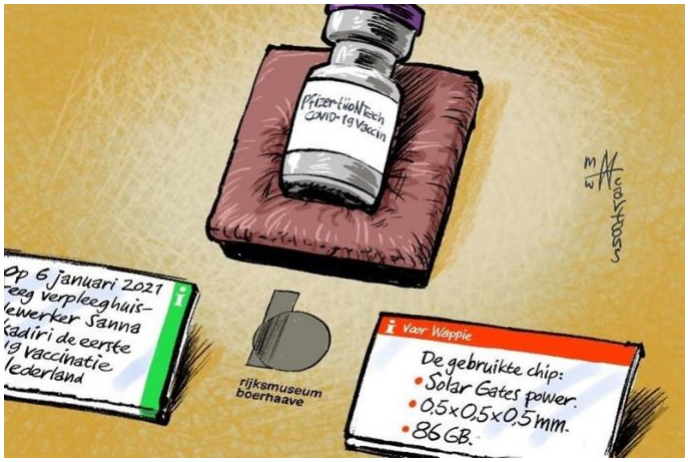

Figure 6 Maarten Wolterink, *Digital-born cartoon "Primeur Leids Museum…" (COVID-19 vaccine)*, 2021, (Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, inv.no. P20940).

Figure 7 Accompanied label of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and Maarten Wolterink's digital cartoon in the exhibition Besmet, 2022, (Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, Besmet), Photo Author.

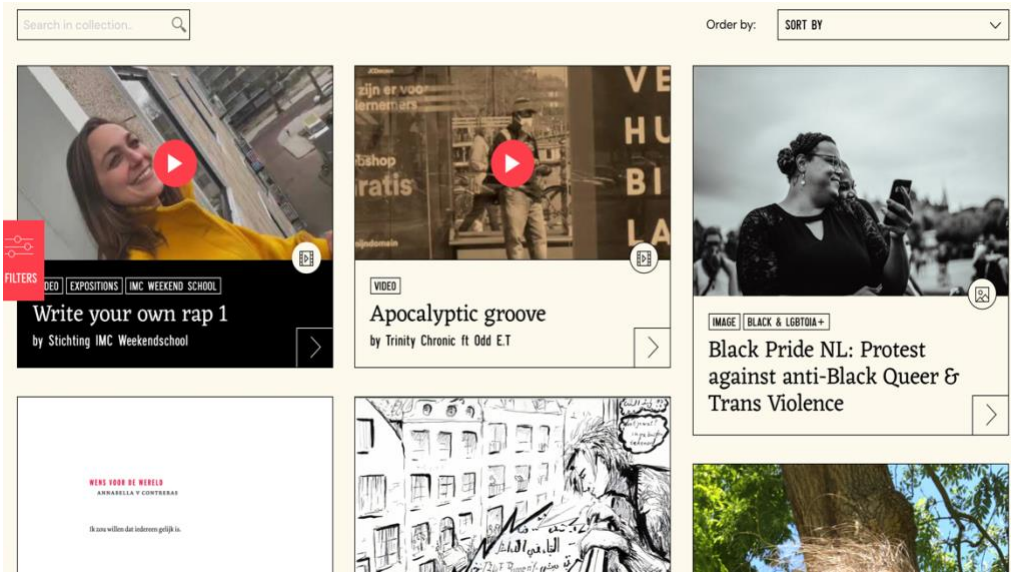

Figure 8 Screenshot of the digital collection of Corona in de Stad, (Amsterdam Museum), Screenshot Author, June 10, 2022.

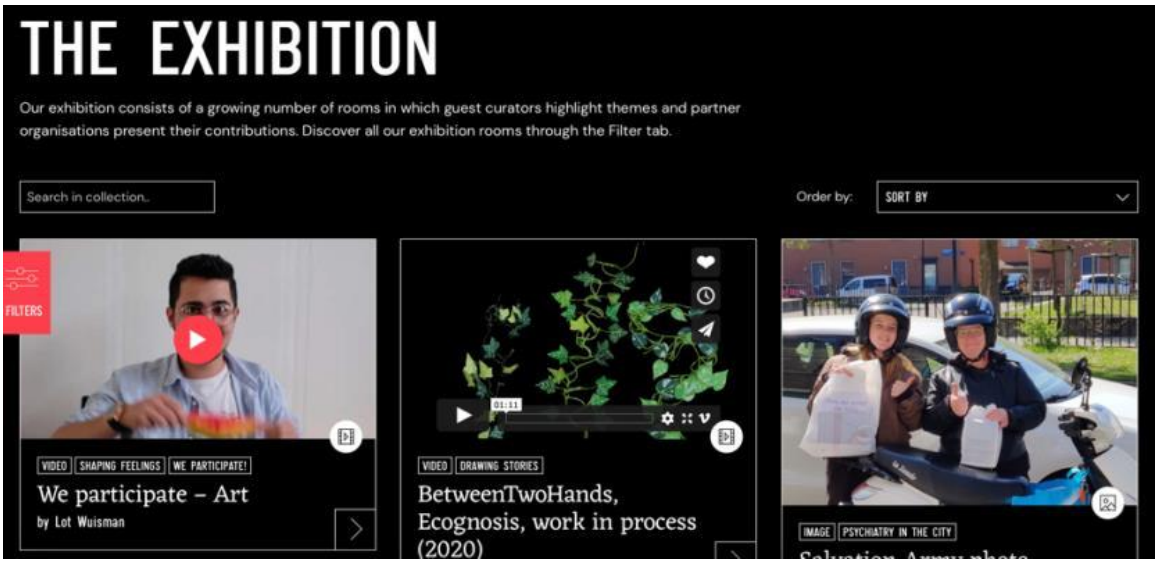

Figure 9 Screenshot of the digital exhibition of Corona in de Stad with individual items, (Amsterdam Museum), Screenshot Author, June 10, 2022.

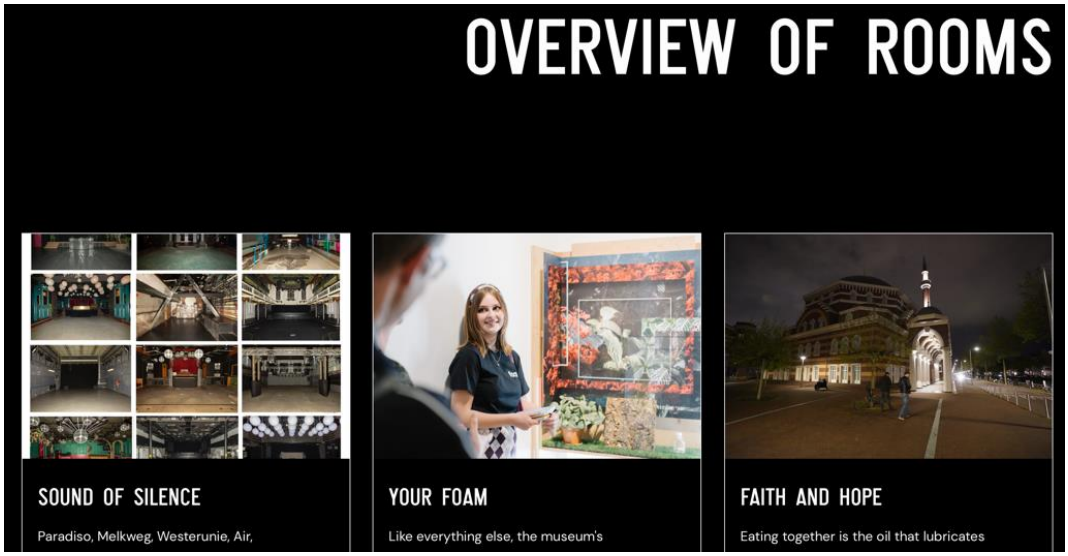

Figure 10 Screenshot of the digital exhibition of Corona in de Stad with thematic rooms, (Amsterdam Museum), Screenshot Author, June 10, 2022.

Figure 11 Tweeter, *Screenshot of Tweet,* 2020, (Museum of London).

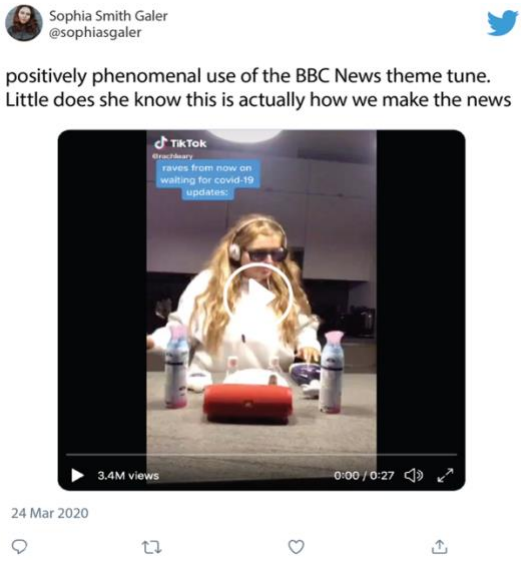

Figure 12 Tweeter, *Screenshot of Tweet*, 2020, (Museum of London).

Illustrations credits

Figure 1. Screenshot captured June 8, 2022. https://ifph.hypotheses.org/3225.

Figure 2. Screenshot captured June 8, 2022. https://digitalmuseums.at/index.html.

Figure 3. Photo taken December 7, 2022.

Figure 4. Downloaded, June 8, 2022. https://boerhaave.adlibhosting.com/Details/collect/75472.

Figure 5. Photo taken December 7, 2022.

Figure 6. Downloaded June 8, 2022. https://boerhaave.adlibhosting.com/Details/collect/74907.

Figure 7. Photo taken December 7, 2022.

Figure 8. Downloaded June 8, 2022. https://www.coronaindestad.nl/en/collection/.

Figure 9. Downloaded June 8, 2022. https://www.coronaindestad.nl/en/#expo-anchor.

Figure 10. Downloaded June 8, 2022. https://www.coronaindestad.nl/en/overview-of-rooms/.

Figure 11. Downloaded June 9, 2022. https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/news/13-lockdown-tweets-acquired-by-museum-of-london-for-project-collecting-pandemic-artefacts/.

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